

Atomic Olive Branch

Services Seek at Least One Voice On the A. E. C., Make Overture

By C. B. Allen

WASHINGTON.

HIGH-RANKING officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force are hopeful that one by-product of the forthcoming atomic tests on Eniwetok atoll may be eventual membership for the military in the new exclusively civilian Atomic Energy Commission.

These men do not belong to the clique which wanted to perpetuate military control over nuclear energy development after the war and they do not want to establish such control now—but they do feel that the armed forces should be made "a real member of the team" rather than a "mere bat boy."

Their hope that this may come to pass is based on the fact that the military establishment has made a friendly overture by naming an A. E. C. scientist to full-fledged membership on its own field test team in preparation for the Eniwetok experiments. For the first time since a joint task force has been set up to conduct such tests, its top staff—hitherto composed solely of Army, Navy and Air Force officers—includes a civilian, Dr. Alvin C. Graves, of the Los Alamos, N. M., scientific laboratory.

Dr. Graves's projection into what, heretofore, has been an exclusively military realm may prove to have no particular significance; on the other hand, it may be a very significant straw. In any event, when the last series of atomic tests were held at Eniwetok in April and May, 1948, the scientists of the A. E. C. functioned only as a subsidiary "task group" working independently of the military staff and reporting directly to the task force commander, Lieutenant General John E. Hull, of the Army. Dr. Graves, incidentally, was deputy director of this scientific group.

Even this modified merging of military and civilian effort in what was essentially a war exercise led General Hull to describe the set-up as "unique" in military organization. He added that it represented "the ultimate in integrated effort" and embodied the concept of preparedness now being taught at the National War College—"the integrated effort of the armed forces with civilian scientists and other specialized civilian elements."

MILITARY officials in position to know say that the "splendid relationship and co-operation" established between the military organization and the A. E. C.'s scientists at Eniwetok under General Hull have improved ever since. But they do not deny that they expect still better liaison under the newly announced arrangement giving the A. E. C. direct representation on the Eniwetok "war council" at staff level. Similarly, these experts main-

tain, the effectiveness of the nation's atomic defenses inevitably would be strengthened if the military establishment had direct representation in the A. E. C. instead of having to rely on indirect representation through the commission's military liaison committee and the A. E. C.'s director of military application, Brigadier General James McCormack jr.

"No matter how good the men are who hold these jobs—and their respective services see to it that they are the best available—they still can't be as effective as a man who sits at the head table," one critic of the present A. E. C. military set-up said. "There have been times when the commission calls them in and treats them like office boys—and I am afraid we have acted much the same way with respect to A. E. C. top scientists attending atomic field tests where the military runs the show. It's high time for us to get together at the same level on both sides of the fence."

This, of course, cannot be accomplished on the A. E. C. side by the mere willingness to do so; it would require amendment of the McMahon Atomic Energy Act of 1946. This, after months of wrangling over the issue, both in Congressional hearings and legislative debate, determined that all five members of the A. E. C. must be civilians.

MANY responsible military men are convinced that Congress would modify the law to permit one military member on the commission—and they insist that one is all they want—if the A. E. C. itself indicated a belief that this is desirable. Such officers view the according of staff-officer status to Dr. Graves as a definite bid for such an expression from the A. E. C.—though there also are those who imply that the commission "forced" the military to put its scientist on the joint task force staff.

For the most part, however, the latter view emanates from the same group that has given rise to reports of long-standing friction and failure to exchange vital information between the A. E. C. and the armed forces. Probably the crowning rumor in this category—publicly scotched last week by Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, at a luncheon speech before the National Press Club—was that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not been informed by the A. E. C. how many atomic bombs the United States has in its stockpile or the rate at which they are being produced.

From other authoritative sources it was learned that not only the Joint Chiefs but Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson know these vital facts and that they are "continuously informed" by the A. E. C. on all phases of development in the field of atomic energy.

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