

SECRET November 29, 1944

To: Dr. R. C. Tolman
From: W. A. Shurcliff
Subject: "Fission" vocabulary.

Explanation: It is obvious that sooner or later a vocabulary must be worked out for concepts pertaining to "fission". Some suggestions are made below. By using the words suggested - or equivalent words - embarrassments, apologetic quotation marks, and cumbersome circumlocutions may be avoided. (Thus instead of saying "23 may be made to undergo fission", or "23 is a fissionable material", one says merely "23 is a fishant", or "23 is fishable", or "23 fishes").

Results: The following vocabulary is suggested:

Transitive verb: I fish 25.
He fishes 25.
He is fishing 25
He has fished 25.
25 has been fished.

Intransitive verb:
25 fishes readily.
Yesterday 1 gram of 25 fished.

Nouns (for the process) Fission is important.

Noun (for the material) 25 is a well-known fishant.

Adjective 23 is fishable.

Discussion: The shortest satisfactory word has been chosen in each instance, in the belief that long words would soon succumb to shorter slang words. Thus fishable is chosen in preference to fissionable.

- 2 -

Fishant is immediately suggested by such words as reagent, coolant, detergent, (Fisher might appear attractive for this purpose. However, (a) Fisher is identical in sound to fissure, and (b) fisher usually means one who fishes.)

I presume, by the way, that it is desirable to define fission itself as: "A nuclear disintegration in which a nuclear mass decreases by more than 4 mass units". That is, I presume no one wants to use the word fission for such conventional and non-drastring processes as emission of: Alpha particle, deuteron, proton, neutron, electron, or photon.

W. A. Shurcliff

SECRET

This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Act, U.S.C., 50 31 and 32, and the transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.