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February 21, 1952

MEMORANDUM

TO: BILL BORDEN *WB*
FROM: JOHN WALKER *X*
SUBJECT: SECOND LABORATORY. *X*

When the next big step by Russia comes, dramatizing the sense of urgency which should be present in our thermonuclear program, it is to be presumed that a second laboratory will be built. At the present time, however, the General Advisory Committee and the Commission are against a second laboratory.

It is still possible, however, for a private citizen to undertake to do what the Commission so far has been unable to do. An eminent scientist could undertake organization of a small but select group of theoretical physicists, willing, out of patriotism and a strong sense of urgency, to undertake one of the greatest services to the nation that could be rendered. This individual could be given an amount of cash required to engage in the recruitment of his staff, with the understanding that a sustained thermonuclear program was a primary, but not exclusive project. After this group had been contacted, a second laboratory site and program details could largely be tailored to the factors which would induce the group to follow through on such a program. Following semi-formalization, this group could then go to the AEC and offer to start what in effect would be the second laboratory, if given requisite funds, facilities and restricted data access.

This procedure recognizes the difference between seeking scientists to go into a highly organized laboratory and a group willing to act to achieve a program which otherwise might be left undone.

It also might draw the men whom Los Alamos has twice failed to get--when they failed to capitalize upon the Korean war and upon the success of the George shot at Greenhouse. It would give initial impetus from a non-government and non-military establishment, both of which would be important from a moral standpoint. And it might be a means of achieving a second laboratory which would be feasible in light both of the arguments for a laboratory and the deeply rooted feelings against it.

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J.S.W.

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