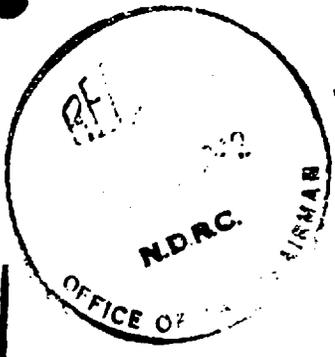


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The University of Chicago

Metallurgical Laboratory

September 7, 1942



MIDWAY 0800 EXT 1290

CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. H. T. Wensel
1530 P Street NW
Washington, D. C.

DECLASSIFIED
By [Signature] NARS, Date 7/26/18
FU 3/13/81

Dear Harry:

A point has come up this morning in connection with deferments of our Research Assistants and Laboratory Assistants which I feel should be presented. All of these men are in possession of certain general information concerning the nature of our work. In the case of the Research Assistants, in many instances they occupy positions of considerable responsibility and consequently have a considerable knowledge of the nature of the problem and the progress being made. Even in the case of the Laboratory Assistants, the nature of the problem and the mode of attack are obvious. It is true that in neither case do the men have detailed knowledge except perhaps in some particular phase, but were it possible for us to gain as much knowledge of Axis progress as any one of these men possess, it would be inestimable assistance.

The point, of course, is simply this, that we are now putting men with this information directly into the armed forces if their deferments are not granted and consequently opening a possible line of information to the Axis should any of these men subsequently be captured. It is true that the possibility of one of these particular men being captured is small. Nevertheless, the possibility is finite. If the enemy does have lists of the personnel working not only on this OSRD secret project but also on other projects, they are in an excellent position to "extract" the desired information by their own inimitable methods. We can not neglect the possibility that such lists of personnel do exist, in fact, it would seem rather more than less probable that they do so.

I am ~~am~~ opposed to making this project a safe haven for those who would dodge military service. (Actually in our own case, I have plenty of reason to feel that the risks many of these men will run are fully as great as they would be in actual combat.) However, the services of these men are acutely needed. We have been attempting to find women who have had the AB degree with a major in Physics and if possible one or two years of graduate work, but the number of these who are qualified for the work seems to be very small. Moreover, some of these men are now serving as foremen, responsible for directing the work crews of high school boys. To put the average college girl graduate in charge of such crews might not work out too well and the work which these boys are doing is not the sort of thing which should be done by women. As the work progresses, the prospect is that more of the men in this class will have to step into such positions since the requisite training can only be obtained here on the job.

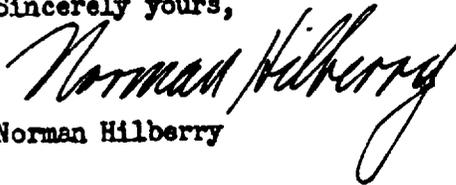
The situation sums up about like this, our urgent need for the services of these young ABs and trained technicians is such that if the facts concerning the nature of their work and the hazards could be stated, that alone should justify their deferment. In addition there is this definite avenue of information to the Axis which is opened by their induction into combat service. This

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Dr. H. T. Wensel
Page -2-

too, furnishes a strong argument for deferment in spite of the odds against the capture of one of these particular men. Taken together, in my prejudiced eyes, they present an extremely strong case for claiming the deferment of the group. Whether or not the "security" argument is one which can be presented, I do not know but I should like to raise the question for your investigation. I should be glad to hear what sort of comments you get. I am not sure but what the same line of reasoning as far as the "security" matter is concerned applies just as much to various other OSRD projects as it does to ours.

Sincerely yours,



Norman Hilberry

NH:DL