

PRESS CONFERENCE

SECRETARY OF WAR ROBERT P. PATTERSON

CLINTON ENGINEER WORKS

29 September 1945

Patterson:

I want to express my appreciation to you on behalf of the War Department for the very effective assistance we have had from the press in the line of protecting the security which is the Army word for secrecy. It was necessary for the success of the atomic bomb project. The press also helped in other ways, including the judicious handling of correspondence which you gave us and many other aspects of our work wherein we have had only the most cordial cooperation, and we appreciate it. I know you will ask me and I will anticipate your question as to what is the future of the atomic bomb program. The War Department will proceed with the operation of the Manhattan District until the permanent policy of the nation is declared by the President and Congress. We take our marching orders; we are going forward with our own policy until someone gives us another program and then we will carry it out.

Question:

How did they happen to pick this specific location?

Patterson:

We canvassed the whole country and it was considered the most favorable site. I think General Groves can tell you how many miles he and his people traveled over the continental United States.

Groves:

We looked at many sites and this one was chosen.

Question:

Did the T.V.A. have anything to do with it?

Groves:

We needed power, water, climate and a number of other things and this was the site selected.

Question:

What is the Army's position on the release of the secret?

Patterson:

I am not in a position to say that. A decision as to policy is to be

made by the President and is to be made very shortly and I prefer not to say anything about that, but you won't have to wait long.

Question:

How many people actually knew what you were doing?

Patterson:

I don't think anyone could answer that question.

Question:

Less than 100?

Patterson:

I would say more than that but that would be pure speculation.

Question:

How soon after the operation began did you actually know?

Patterson:

I knew that there was such a project from the outset. I had never been here until today. There is a lot about it I don't know yet and never will because I don't have the scientific knowledge.

Question:

Is there anything to the rumor that you are making a super bomb that would make the Nagasaki bomb look small?

Patterson:

I don't know.

Groves:

I don't think the Nagasaki bomb was made obsolete. That bomb could never be made obsolete. *What we used are pretty super.*

Question:

In that connection what were the results of the official investigation on the radioactivity of Hiroshima after the explosion of the bomb?

Groves:

There has been nothing official released in the sense of a War Department release but there has been a definite statement by General Farrell who inspected the actual site with competent persons to assist him and to render

the decision that there has been none of this prolonged radioactivity that the Japanese mentioned. No one, as far as we know, has incurred any injury after the first bomb.

Question:

Is there such a thing being planned as a super bomb?

Groves:

No, I don't think so. They talk about airplanes that will go around the world, etcetera. This thing has just started and no one knows just what will develop.

Question:

What are the prospects of developing radioactivity from other fields besides uranium?

Groves:

I don't ever expect to see it or my children to see it. We have just opened the door and no one knows.

Question:

Is there any way of looking into the future on peace-time uses? I don't suppose the War Department is interested in that.

Patterson:

We are ^{interested} ~~concerned~~ as long as we have charge of the project on any development. The policy of the nation on that will be for the President and Congress to declare.

Question:

If this bomb was dropped in water, does it have more effect in water or on land?

Patterson:

We don't know. It has not been demonstrated.

Question:

Can you give us some sort of idea about the future use of atomic power in warfare and whether it would preclude a large standing Army and Navy?

Patterson:

I cannot give you an answer on that. It is too new now to formulate any definite plan on that. *It will receive close study but on the need to be involved now.*

Question:

Are there any other countries who know how to split atoms?

Patterson:

The opinion of the scientists is more valuable on that than mine. They say that the main principles are well known to scientists all over the world.

Question:

Does that mean the only secret we have left is how to process it?

Patterson:

I don't know.

Question:

Do you feel the power of the enemy nations has been completely smashed to conduct atomic research?

Patterson:

For the time being, yes. Certainly as long as our occupation forces are there.

Question:

I would like for you to comment on Hirohito's visit to MacArthur. What was the purpose of his visit?

Patterson:

I have not had the faintest idea.

Question:

You mean you haven't received a report?

Patterson:

If there has been a report, I have not seen it.

Question:

Do you have any ideas as to the future of the Special Engineer Detachment located on the project?

Groves:

I think the answer to that is that subject to the general policies of the War Department, we expect to continue to use the SED as long as it is necessary

and no longer. We expect to give every consideration to the men in that detachment who expect to be discharged.

Patterson:

As far as discharges and separation from the service are concerned, consider it the same as other branches in the army. That is as individuals. Or was your question as to the organization?

Groves:

We will diminish the organization as other things diminish.

Question:

Regardless of what policy is established, is there any reason why the atomic bomb project cannot be kept as one of the War Department functions?

Patterson:

There is no reason. It is possible under legislation and the form of control that the legislation may set up, that it may be committed to the War Department or the Corps of Engineers for operation.

Question:

In the opinion of the Cabinet, is it unanimous on the future of the bomb or is it divided? I was thinking of Wallace in particular.

Patterson:

I cannot answer that.

Press Conference closed at 4:00 P.M.