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HST 415 Nuclear Era

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10/15/20

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In 1949 at the start of the cold war with the Soviet Union, the Congressmen and Senators on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE) received a report from the General Advisory Commission (GAC) concerning the feasibility of building a “Super” hydrogen bomb. The purpose of the meeting is to recommend to the president whether to pursue building the “Super” and if it is in our interest as a country in doing so. The main discussion is the feasibility report that was submitted by the GAC on this issue. In this report there are signed letters from prominent scientists including Robert J. Oppenheimer, the father of the fission bomb, to not build the “Super” and push for international control of atomic weapons. The senators and congressman on the JCAE did not react well to the scientists giving their opinions in a feasibility report, however it did help the JCAE reach a decision on building the “Super” and what the end goal of atomic weapons would be. There are three parts, first is the reaction of the JCAE to this letter and how surrounding circumstances led them to this reaction. Secondly, the JCAE members understanding the implications of the “Super” in the letter itself. Lastly, the end notes of the meeting and the further steps the JCAE was taking before giving a recommendation to the president.

The reason the meeting was being held was for two reasons. The JCAE was inquiring the GAC to see if building a “Super” was even possible. In addition, the JCAE needed to give the president a recommendation on how to proceed with the “Super”. A few months before the Soviets had detonated Joe-1 and it was the start of the Cold War. In terms of national policy,quote here. The JCAE wanted to have an answer for the Soviets. The problem was that they needed to show the country and their allies they would be safe from the Soviet threat. So, building the “Super” in theory would keep America and allies safe from any threats. The letter from the GAC was understandably was not very well received. The scientists did not want to build this since it would only be used for genocide “quote here”. Senator … did not like this at all. “Quote”. To the JCAE the scientists were asked to perform a simple study into how long it would take to build the “Super” and came back with a petition and recommendations on policy not build it. They were preaching peace while the senators and congressmen felt the Soviet threat. The reaction to this petition was perfectly reasonable under the current circumstances. However, the GAC report contained statistics and estimates on the damage that a “Super” could create that validated the argument the scientists were trying to make.

How did the Congressmen on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy understand and receive the General Advisory Commission Report of October 1949?

<http://alexwellerstein.com/teaching/documents/?pdf=h-bomb_timeline.pdf>

Notes:

They didn’t really like that the scientists were forcing their hand especially that one senator.

The scientists made them think about the endgame policy.

What exactly building this bomb would achieve in terms of international policy.

Outline:

Intro

Summary <- intro to events, introduction of chairman and mean senator

Reason for meeting = leak on national tv? Double check

Hypo: the scientist’s general advisory report did not have a good reception but did have its intended effect. The GAC understood that total human annihilation was why this weapon should never be built.

Main point 1:

How the senators received the letter

Analysis:

Did not like that the scientists put their own opinions in the feasibility study. –that’s clear.

Discuss the later points that the scientists are civilians and are raising their point. Also that it is so important to them that they actually protested this. Quote people saying this makes sense. Also explain why the peeps are hesitant on taking advice. Point to the current political situation.

Main Point 2:

Senators understanding the letter.

Analysis:

Implications of the super in general. They acknowledge there is something wrong here with this many people getting killed.

Main Point 3:

They discuss implications and the end goal of building the super

Analysis:

The scientists plea works a little bit. Instead of just going ahead with the super, they are reviewing the advisory committee, and also putting an end goal with the super as a deterrent and international control as a bargaining chip--

Conclusion

Review the events in the article

Recap analysis and say that the scientists article did help them make decisions