# ATOMIC DELAY LAID TO A. E. C. ADVISERS

## Even Dr. Conant Should Yield to Men With Faith in Goal, Coast Chemists Are Told

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LOS ANGELES, March 7—Serious and unnecessary delays in the atomic energy program were charged tonight by Dr. Kenneth S. Pitzer, who for more than two years directed research for the Atomic Energy Commission.

In an address before the American Chemical Society's Southern California section, he called for an overhauling of the commission's basic rules of procedure to reduce the authority of scientific "kibitzers" and put more dependence on laboratory directors and A. E. C. project engineers.

Even such top scientists as Dr. James B. Conant, president of Harvard University, should be replaced as commission advisers by men "with faith and enthusiasm in the job to be done" and who would give the commission "constructive advice," Dr. Pitzer asserted. More than one of the influential members of long standing on the general advisory committee, he added, seem to have "remarkably little enthusiasm for the primary goals of the Atomic Energy Commission."

The 38-year-old dean of the College of Chemistry on the University of California's Berkeley campus declared men were needed "who will specialize in pointing out new fields to explore rather than in double-checking decisions in projects already under way."

### Notes Similar Opinions

Mentioning Dr. Conant, he said the Harvard president was on record as having "little hope for useful atomic power" and as having "predicted that in the Nineteen-sixties the effort in that direction will be abandoned."

"Certain other members of the committee have expressed similar opinions," Dr. Pitzer went on. "* * * There are men of comparable stature who are on record as believing great new developments in atomic energy are possible.

"These include Dr. Harold C. Urey, a Nobel laureate; Dr. Farrington Daniels, the president-elect of the American Chemical Society, and Dr. Charles Thomas, ex-president of the A. C. S. and president of Monsanto Chemical Company."

Dr. Pitzer, who directed the commission's research from January, 1949, until last June, described the Atomic Energy Commission as "reasonably efficient by general governmental standards" but said the country had a right to expect "something special in this vital area."

Because of its method of operation, for which he blamed in large part Government monopoly in atomic energy, he asserted that the atomic reactor development program had been delayed for at least a year.

### "Period of Indecision" Costly

The first of these reactors, or atomic furnaces, and the atomic bomb itself were actually produced in wartime within about three years, Dr. Pitzer said. If there was a major disagreement then over the course to be pursued, "both routes were followed," he added.

But lately, he said, neither route was followed until after an "exhaustive series of preliminary studies" that delayed a project a year or more and actually was expensive "because all sorts of costs continued during the period of indecision."

Certainly, Dr. Pitzer said, after the successful reactors had been built at the Hanford Plutonium Works, near Richland, Wash., the further job of building a reactor to produce electric power by atomic energy was no more difficult.

Yet, he noted, not until last December, or more than six years after the end of the war, did an atomic reactor on the commission's multi-thousand acre testing ground near Idaho Falls, Idaho, produce 100 kilowatts of electric power.

"The slowness," Dr. Pitzer declared, "did not arise from a lack of designs for power reactors which reputable scientists and engineers were willing to build and test. It came rather from an unwillingness of the commission to proceed with any one of these designs until all of the advisers agreed that this was the best design."

The speaker likened the present setup, with a multitude of committees advising the Atomic Energy Commission, to an automobile equipped with a separate brake level for every passenger.

He contended that cautiousness, reaching sometimes "silly extremes," had held up the reactor program until the Idaho proving ground could be procured, although "safer and smaller models could have been built without any signifcant risk on the original Argonne (near Chicago) and Oak Ridge, Tenn. sites with great savings in both time and money."

The New York Times
Published: March 8, 1952