

Memorandum

DATE: MAY 15 1989

TO: ER-1 (Louis Ianniello/586-9776)

SUBJECT: Letter to Professor Harold Lewis on Cold Fusion

TO: The Secretary

ISSUE/ACTION STATEMENT

- o Professor Lewis, University of California, has written to you on the subject of cold fusion.

DISCUSSION

- o Professor Lewis' letter expresses displeasure at the Department's continued support for activities related to cold fusion. The attached letter simply acknowledges that the Department also wants to conclude the debate, but is looking at a broader set of issues and has enlisted the laboratories and ERAB to provide assistance.

CONCERNS/SENSITIVITIES

- o Professor Lewis is a member of the Advisory Committee of Nuclear Facility Safety.

RECOMMENDATION

- o Sign the attached letter which, in addition, invites Professor Lewis to provide the ERAB panel with his thoughts on the subject of cold fusion. We have informed ERAB and will make the arrangements if Professor Lewis accepts.

Robert O. Hunter, Jr.

Robert O. Hunter, Jr.
Director
Office of Energy Research

Attachment:
Letter to Professor Lewis

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ER-60
Ludler
5/12/89

Robert O. Hunter, Jr.
Director
Office of Energy Research

ER-2
Decker
5/12/89

Attachment:
Letter to Professor Lewis

bcc:
ES(4)
ER-1(3)
ER-60(1)
ER-11(file)
RMarley(ER-1)

ER-11:LIanniello:dm:5/12/89:enable/C:HLEWIS

Professor Harold Lewis
Professor of Physics
Physics Department
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

Dear Professor Lewis:

Thank you for your letter of May 10, 1989, in which you provided us with your thoughts on cold fusion. We understand your concern and we also want to bring the scientific debate to an early conclusion.

For that reason, we have asked the Energy Research Advisory Board (ERAB) to set up a panel to review the overall issue of cold fusion. That panel will be chaired by Professor Norman Ramsey and Professor John Huizenga, and they will hold their first meeting during the Santa Fe Workshop, May 23-25, 1989. Also towards that end, I have asked the Department of Energy laboratories to help unravel the technical issues. In this way we will quickly move to a position where we can make a decision based on the broadest perspective of cold fusion. As you know, muon catalyzed fusion is a form of cold fusion and is recognized as a real phenomenon. We are looking to the ERAB panel to provide us with an overall perspective on this subject.

I appreciate your interest and comments and invite you to provide your thoughts directly to the ERAB panel we have established. Please contact Dr. Robert O. Hunter, Jr., should you desire to appear before the panel or submit any written comments.

Sincerely,

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

memorandum

DATE: MAY 11 1989

ATTN OF: ER-1

SUBJECT: Cold Fusion

TO: The Secretary

I received the attached letter from Dr. H. D. Lewis today for your consideration. I am preparing a reply which will include a discussion of the review committee which, in the course of examining the various results, should consider Dr. Lewis' comments.

Robert O. Hunter, Jr.
Robert O. Hunter, Jr.
Director
Office of Energy Research

Attachment

cc w/att:
Steve May
Gary Gibbs

Advisory Committee on Nuclear Facility Safety

to the
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

May 10, 1989

Bob
NOTE TO: Robert O. Hunter, ER-1

Wally
FROM: Wallace R. Kornack

SUBJECT: E-Mail Message from Dr. Hal Lewis

Professor Hal Lewis, University of California, transmitted today the attached E-Mail letter for Admiral Watkins. He wanted the letter passed on to the Admiral through you.

New Energy Times Archive

(Retyped E-Mail Message from Dr. Hal Lewis, 5/10/89)

Dear Admiral Watkins:

While I do serve on one of your advisory committees, I write this as an individual scientist. No support from others is implied, though I have little doubt that it is there.

It was clear from the very beginning that the Utah chemists' claims of limitless free energy from cold fusion were scientifically wrong--- simply error in the laboratory, coupled with inexcusable unwillingness to either admit it or to help others search for the truth---and what little support there was from a few scattered reports of partial confirmation has long since vanished. At the May 1 meeting of the American Physical Society in Baltimore, all of the sources of error were dredged out in embarrassing detail, and I do not know of any reputable scientists---none---who give any residual credence to the claims. It was never the responsibility of the scientific community to find the errors in the Pons/Fleischman experiments, but theirs to convince others that they were right, yet the special circumstances of publicity and politics led to the reversal of roles in this case. Be that as it may, the scientific debate, such as it was, is now over, and there is not, and never was, cold fusion.

Given that, does it no seem improper for the Department to be continuing in throwing good money after bad. Among other things, it is sponsoring a large meeting at Los Alamos in two weeks, devoted to these phoney claims, and adding perhaps several millions of dollars to the large sums already wasted on the subject. It is not too late to simply call off all further waste of Department money. That the Department should have an open mind to scientific advances is of course clear, as is its obligation to separate fact from fancy in the pursuit of those advances. That is not a matter of choice---it is a duty. The Utah people have long since forfeited their right to the benefit of the doubt by their intransigence in refusing others access to the details of their purported experiments. Their behavior is certainly far from the accepted scientific norm, and now verges on fraud, which the Department should not condone.

I urge you to reconsider the Department's continued sponsorship of what has clearly become pseudo-science, both for the good of the Department and for the good of the country. Pseudo-science dilutes the environment in which we must all work, and is a form of intellectual pollution which keeps people from doing their real jobs. Intellectual pollution may be less tangible than other forms for which the Department has sad but acknowledged historic responsibility, but it is no less real, and is no less malodorous.

Sincerely,
H. W. Lewis