

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SPACE SCIENCE BOARD

Dr. Heckerling

September 16, 1959

Dr. L. V. Berkner, President
Associated Universities, Inc.
10 Columbus Circle
New York 19, N. Y.

Dear Lloyd:

I am writing in response to your letter of 17 August 1959, regarding the statement of Loftus E. Becker to the United Nations ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. If you continue the reading of the extract which you quoted in your letter, he states that "This, then, is the initial thinking of my Government with respect to Paragraph 1 (d) of the Resolution of 13 December."

This Resolution is cited in part on the first page of his speech; paragraph 1 (d) refers to "The nature of legal problems which may arise in the carrying out of programmes to explore outer space."

We have discussed with State the context intended by Mr. Becker's remark about extraterrestrial life and our contacts there confirm our initial opinion that he was simply saying that the U. S. Government attaches at this time a low priority to the question of legal relations with intelligent forms of extraterrestrial forms of life.

We ourselves were somewhat concerned with another remark of Becker's having to do with public health, safety and contamination (page 7 of the press release of May 7). Here he states that "Some consideration may be given to ... what agreements or regulations are needed to safeguard space or celestial bodies from contamination." Again, State advises that Becker was speaking in a legal context and referring to the possible need for international agreements and regulations. Becker's remarks should be looked at in the light of the final report of the U. N. ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on this subject, which State advises represents the

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position of the U.S. Government. In this context, the Government endorses the need for further studies by scientific bodies such as CETEX and COSPAR prior to adopting any position which might lead to international regulations of a legal character.

In view of these reassurances from the State Department, I do not believe that we need to pursue Becker's remarks further. I am, however, sending copies of this letter to those who received copies of your letter to me of 17 August, as well as to Dr. Porter.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Odishaw
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Martine
Dr. Lederberg
Dr. Porter
Dr. Rossi
Dr. Urey