Compton, Ill, Quits Research Post; Warns on Cuts in Defense Study

By FELIX BELAIR Jr.
Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3—Dr. Karl T. Compton, noted atomic physicist, resigned today as chairman of the Research and Development Board of the Department of Defense. In a letter to President Truman, Dr. Compton said his decision was dictated by reasons of health.

In accepting the resignation, Mr. Truman wrote Dr. Compton that concern for his health left the President no alternative but to bow to medical advice and "with the utmost regret" terminate his commission effective on the appointment of a successor. Dr. Compton asked for and received a leave of absence without salary beginning Nov. 15.

Pending the naming of a successor and at the suggestion of the retiring chairman, President Truman said the board would be headed by Dr. Robert F. Rinehart as deputy chairman. Two representatives each of the Army, Navy and Air Force complete the board's membership under a civilian chairman.

In his letter of resignation that served also for his valedictory, Dr. Compton warned against "across-the-board" cuts in research and development funds in the defense budget. He said the agency had "sufficiently intimate and competent contact with the programs under its cognizance to justify financial control on a more rational basis."

Dr. Compton was mildly critical of the checks and counter-checks that site and security imposed on scientific work in the Defense Establishment but which he said "discourage competent research personnel from entering careers under such auspices, except as they are motivated by patriotism or by an-

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FORCED OUT BY HEALTH

Dr. Karl T. Compton
The New York Times (Washington Bureau)

COMPTON RESIGNS AS RESEARCH HEAD

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tivation for some particular professional opportunity."

The former president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology conceded that such handicaps were partially inescapable "in the complexity of government and its long chains of public accountability." He noted some recent improvement in policies of research administration among Federal agencies and added:

"But sometimes the effect of high-level investigations or attacks is to multiply excessively the controls on research agencies, and thus to defeat the stated objectives of 'efficiency.'"

Dr. Compton stressed that the latter observation was intended to be general in its application "and not related particularly to the Military Establishment."

Program Called "Sound"

Meanwhile, the President had Dr. Compton's word for it that "while always susceptible of improvement, the program of military research and development is sound." He said it was intelligently conceived and directed and added:

"Examination in detail by competent experts, in many cases spot-checked by several intensive investigations, has failed to uncover significant cases of unwarranted duplication."

Dr. Compton gave his personal estimate, based on comparative experience in privately operated research establishments, that "major inefficiencies in research under Governmental auspices are not due to faulty technical planning, but to the complications of excessive checks and counterchecks which multiply the manpower requirements for securing research results."

These were the same checks and counterchecks which, he said, had such discouraging effects on Government research personnel.

While Dr. Compton suggested much room for improvement in Federal research administration there was much of solid achievement by the board to which he pointed in his letter to the President.

"For the first time," he said, "it has been available to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a complete report on the status of every research and development item which may be important in future military strategy, with estimates of performance characteristics and dates of availability.

Truman Praises His Work

"For the first time it has been possible to recommend to the Secretary of Defense, in connection with the plans for fiscal 1951, a budget for research and development which is not based, as in preceding years since the war, on the accidental factor of temporary shortage of research personnel, but on carefully considered estimates of the military importance and technical feasibility of specific projects, all within realistic financial limits."

President Truman praised Dr. Compton's contributions to the national welfare.

"For many years," the President wrote Dr. Compton, "your grateful countrymen will remember your extraordinary contributions to the national security through your service as chairman of the Research and Development Board. Not less remarkable than the things which you have accomplished personally are the things which you have helped others to accomplish and the outstanding year-all results which have been achieved under your leadership."

Dr. Compton, who is 62 years old, told the President in his letter of resignation that he had determined to leave the Federal service because of "medical advice which I cannot ignore." He was appointed to the chairmanship of the research agency in 1945, succeeding Dr. Vannevar Bush.

Truman Asks Utility Leader To Head Top Research Body

By JAMES RESTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—President Truman has offered the Government's top scientific job—chairmanship of the Research and Development Board in the Department of Defense—to William Webster of Boston, advice president of the New England Electric System, it was learned today.

Mr. Webster, 49 years old, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and former chairman of the Defense Department's Military Liaison Committee with the Atomic Energy Commission, would be largely responsible for preparing an integrated military research and development program so that weapons such as the new hydrogen bomb would take their proper place in a well-balanced defense policy.

The chairmanship of the Research and Development Board was held by Dr. Vannevar Bush from 1947 to 1948 and by Dr. Karl T. Compton, former president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from 1948 until Nov. 2, 1949. Since then the work of the board has been supervised by Dr. Robert F. Rinehart as deputy chairman.

Coincidental with his offer of the Government's principal scientific position to Mr. Webster, President Truman was reported to be working actively on selection of a successor to David E. Lilienthal as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. One person said to be under consideration is Carroll Wilson, present general manager of the AEC.

Mr. Lilienthal is reliably reported to have proposed that control of

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IT'S A TRITON BOMB, MIGHTIEST POSSIBLE

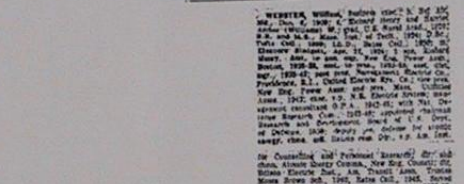
Would Release Energy More Than Seven Times '45 Type —No Critical-Mass Limit

By WILLIAM L. LAURENCE

What President Truman referred to yesterday as "the so-called hydrogen bomb" is not a hydrogen bomb at all in the true scientific meaning of the term.

This, the most powerful superbomb that can be built on earth, it can now be revealed, actually is the triton bomb, in which the basic element used is tritium, a hydrogen isotope (twin) of atomic mass 3. It is an element hardly known to the public but well known to nuclear physicists. A triton is the nucleus of tritium, composed of one proton and two neutrons.

The term hydrogen, as used by scientists, refers strictly to the common form of hydrogen of atomic mass 1, a mass that cannot be made into a bomb.

While the process responsible for the vast amounts of energy released by the sun every second is

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