

Mrs. Woerner

May 15, 1942

HAD/ab

Dr. R. R. Sayers, Director
U. S. Bureau of Mines
Washington, D. C.

Dear Director Sayers:

My Service Rating of April 15, 1941, has been designated as "Fair", which permits demotion of one step within grade. The attached correspondence demonstrates conclusively that this rating by Dr. R. S. Dean has been actuated by personal spite and prejudice. The situation is so unusual and has such a profound bearing on the welfare of the Metallurgical Division that I take the liberty of urging you to give this matter your earnest personal attention.

The correspondence is clipped in numbered groups to facilitate reference and discussion. Red lines on the margins indicate pertinent paragraphs. The following facts are established in group 1.

Group 1:

The project to which I was assigned involved very difficult problems. Previous efforts to develop an economical process for production of magnesium from magnesite had not been successful and no promising leads had been found. (Note: The American Magnesium Corporation, which produced Mg from magnesite by the "oxide electrolytic process" ceased production in 1927. Dow was spending \$500,000 per year on magnesium research, had 20 years experience in commercial production, and had acquired a complete monopoly based upon experience and patent protection.)

I was selected for the job because of experience and proven abilities. During the first two years (with very moderate funds and facilities provided by Washington State College) the results obtained were most satisfactory to all concerned. My program had the enthusiastic support of several State agencies, which resulted in special Congressional appropriations to the Bureau of Mines intended to enable the construction of a pilot plant.

At this point I was offered a commercial position at considerable increase in salary. Dr. Dean made certain promises in order to induce me to decline that opportunity.

He also suggested that I patent inventions relating to my work and assign those patents to the Chicago Development Corporation in which he was a leading but silent partner. I declined this association for the reasons stated in my letter of December 16.

Group 2:

Preliminary estimates of funds required for a large-scale laboratory submitted by Director Finch indicated a total expenditure for the first year of \$257,972, of which \$181,850 were for equipment and supplies. Actually only \$35,000 was appropriated, and I had every reason to expect that about \$20,000 would be allocated for equipment and supplies.

At this time I expressed concern over Dr. Dean's proposal to augment my staff, stating that the major part of the allotment should be spent for equipment and supplies (see letter May 4, 1939). The technical staff supplied by the College was adequate for the first year during the construction period. My chief requirement would be equipment, supplies, mechanics, and machinists.

Group 3:

Disregarding this obvious necessity Dr. Dean proceeded to transfer Mr. Wilson, Mr. Holbrook, and Miss Laubach to Pullman.

The Congressional estimate of \$19,740 for equipment and supplies was reduced to \$4,447.50 by Dr. Dean !!!!

When Dr. Dean made a visit to Pullman in July 1939 he readily admitted that I could not be expected to carry out the program for which the appropriation was made. He stated that Mr. Leavy had not dealt fairly in regard to appropriations for the Salt Lake station and the deduction of \$10,000 was in the nature of a reprisal and to obtain badly needed funds for Salt Lake. I replied that I did not question his right to deduct the \$10,000 but objected to the allocation of the balance in such a way that it could not be utilized efficiently.

Dr. Dean explained that the transfer of Wilson and Holbrook released funds for other purposes which he deemed essential. He suggested that I "rest on my oars" for a year since he had found that one might be criticized in the Bureau for something one did, but was never criticized for doing nothing!

Dean Drucker was informed about the Pullman allotment during Dr. Dean's visit. Our cooperative agreement with the College required that each party be informed regarding expenditures by the other party to the agreement. Under the circumstances it was inevitable that Dean Drucker would realize the injustice and make a protest. Yet Dr. Dean accused me in his letter of August 7, 1939, of "attempting to build a backfire against those in the Bureau who are responsible for making allotments of funds."

The Pullman project had been given generous financial support by State agencies. The Federal appropriation was the direct result of widespread interest created by Dean Drucker's enthusiastic publicity. I did not approve of this publicity and my efforts to limit or control that publicity did not receive encouragement nor support from the Bureau, and it was not effective. Please note especially my letter of January 31, 1939, to President Holland, which shows the proprietary attitude of all the State agencies. On November 6, 1939, U. S. Representative Charles H. Leavy was quoted as follows in the Spokane Chronicle: "If the experimental work being carried on at W.S.C. at Pullman under Dean Drucker is successful, nothing can stop future development of this region."

Dr. Dean did not attach any importance to that proprietary interest and publicity until it conflicted with his plans. When he sabotaged the Pullman project, he failed to anticipate the effect it would produce. As a result, he changed the attitude of the State officials toward the Bureau from enthusiastic approval to an active hostility. He may have believed that I engineered the protests as suggested in his letter of August 7, and it is evident that Dr. Dean implanted that opinion with the Director and Mr. Fieldner (see letter of August 21, 1940, by Fieldner in Group 5). There was no justification for that assumption, which, if true, should have resulted in my dismissal! Also Dr. Dean did not dare to bring such a charge against me.

I did not quite realize Dr. Dean's motive at the time but I am now completely convinced that he deliberately sabotaged the Pullman project because of personal spite, partly against Mr. Leavy, but chiefly against me because I refused to meet his wishes in regard to patents.

Dr. Dean's critical attitude toward me is shown in the subsequent correspondence. After stating that I could count on the transfer of funds from lapsed salaries to the Supply account (August 17) he found fault because I planned accordingly (Nov. 18, 1939). He also criticized my method of accounting, although it was his and not my figures which were in error. Later (Dec. 11, 1939) he repudiates

his former assurance of promotion. Since July 1, 1939, I have had responsibilities justifying senior rating and have not obtained it.

The allocation of funds forced me to make a complete revision and drastic curtailment of my previous plans. Nevertheless, during the last hearings of the Congressional Appropriations Committee Mr. Ambrose said to Mr. Leavy: "There has never been any shortage of money at Pullman."

Group 4:

The outlook was discouraging. Previous to July 1939 equipment and supplies were furnished by the College. Until Miss Laubach arrived in August lack of forms and information on procedure made it impossible to order equipment and supplies. Miss Laubach at once wired for forms, which were not received complete until September 28, despite repeated requests.

Requests for bids and orders on equipment and supplies were then issued with dispatch, but as a result of excessive delays in obtaining approval (see letter of December 16) only a few items of equipment were obtained before January 1.

About the first of December 1939, U.S. Representative Leavy made a visit to Pullman and came to see what had been accomplished with the \$35,000 he had obtained for this project in which he was so greatly interested. He found what then appeared to be spacious quarters provided by the College practically bare of equipment. There was nothing I could say (even if I had been reconciled to the situation) which could possibly overcome Mr. Leavy's disappointment. I have never been able to conceal my feelings, and my attitude was probably quite revealing. Mr. Leavy proceeded to go on the "war-path", and he was abundantly justified.

When the storm broke Dr. Dean proceeded to shift the blame to me. Please refer to my letter of December 16, 1939, and one from Director Finch to Representative Leavy on December 18. The latter is a masterpiece of evasion and misrepresentation, engineered by Dean. He made a great point of the fact that I could not use any additional staff and completely ignored the shortage of funds for equipment and supplies. The letter contains many misstatements of fact and as a whole is intentionally misleading; it is typical of methods he has subsequently used to discredit my accomplishments.

The excuse for the \$9,900 allotted to Salt Lake was specious. The plan to investigate the properties of magnesium metal and its alloys easily could be postponed until some metal was made. It certainly is no justification for the deliberate sabotage of the

primary purpose of the appropriation!! The salaries of C. T. Anderson and E. V. Potter are listed at \$5667 and \$6600 per year !!! Dean was evidently pressed to account for the use of \$9,900.

The upheaval that ousted Mr. Finch also should have eliminated Dr. Dean, who was primarily responsible. Dr. Dean realized that fact and blamed me for it. Therefore the mild disfavor I had incurred on the patent issue was intensified to a violent antipathy which he suppressed because he did not dare to take any direct action against me. His resentment has been shown by subsequent correspondence, and by his persistent efforts to depreciate my work and reduce my status and influence in the magnesium program. For example, Mr. St. Clair and Mr. Ambrose represent the Bureau as specialists on magnesium, although neither of them were considered qualified to undertake the Pullman project. I have been denied, or only permitted as a result of outside pressure, the privilege of presenting papers at meetings of technical societies. A memorandum from Dean's office to a private firm stated: "At Pullman they are working almost exclusively on electrothermic reduction of magnesia. In this process they use carbon as a reducing agent and quench the volatilized magnesium in oil. They have great difficulty in separating the oil and magnesium mixture." (Partly true but unfair and misleading) "They have abandoned work on the flotation of magnesite some time ago." !!!

Dr. Dean is well aware that Harris and I completed (not abandoned), published, and patented an outstanding flotation process. Subsequent investigations by Clemer and DeVaney (published in A.I.M.E. Tech. Pub. 1148-B-95, 1940) were written up in such a way as to create a false impression that it represented a contribution to the process. Actually only high grade ore ^{was} tested by methods that are not adequate for low grade ores such as really require beneficiation. The 2-stage process I recommend was not tested. The real purpose of the tests was an attempt to show that certain reagents in which Dr. Dean has patent interests were more effective than those Harris preferred.

The Progress Report of the Metallurgical Division for 1939 quoted my reports to a length of 16 pages, including almost half of the illustrations. Ten other contributors averaged 7.4 pages. My name and the cooperation of W.S.C. were absent from the list of contributors. Dr. Dean stated that the omission was an oversight, but that is not true of subsequent discriminations.

No one can get ahead in the Metallurgical Division if he fails to meet Dr. Dean's personal desires in regard to patents. (Ask Mr. F. H. Woodman, who was engineer-in-charge of the Electrolytic Plant at Boulder.) Numerous individuals outside the Bureau have asked me why Dr. Dean is cold toward my accomplishments.

All these indications of hostility make me suspect that Dr. Dean has done everything he could to create prejudice against the process developed at Pullman. In this he has been assisted by the difficulties and accidents at Permanente. Many competent and eminent engineers have expressed surprise that our thermal reduction process has not received more favorable consideration from such agencies as the Office of Production Management and the War Production Board.

Information I have received from a number of unrelated sources indicate that Dr. Dean could not survive a thorough investigation of his activities. It would certainly reveal favoritism, discrimination, nepotism, dissatisfaction, and generally poor morale. The following examples have come to my notice. I cannot vouch for accuracy, but the facts are easily verified.

John M. Morris, engineer-in-charge, Budget and Fiscal Control, Metallurgical Cost and Personnel Unit. Mr. Morris is related to Mrs. Dean. He sorts the mail, refers routine letters to Davis, and takes care of "confidential and personal" correspondence.

J. H. Jacobs, engineer-in-charge, Electrolytic Manganese Unit. Mr. Jacobs is Dean's stepson and quite young and inexperienced for his job.

Billy McCaw, stenographer, is engaged to Jacobs. She replaced Mrs. Julia Siren after extraordinary measures to circumvent civil service rules. Her appointment was rejected by one office, but was finally placed as "metallurgical accountant" through another office. This was a "phoney" classification which could be filled without civil service rating because of a vacant register.

John Noland, clerk, was formerly a W.A.E. laborer. He is Knickerbocker's son-in-law.

Cresop Moss, engineer-in-charge, Materials and Equipment Unit. He eased into the Bureau as laboratory aide in 1936. He has no degree. His wife was secretary to Senator Barkley and is a daughter of a Civil Service Commissioner.

Morris, Jacobs, and Moss have advanced further in five years than I have in twenty.

Group 5:

A deficiency appropriation to relieve and expedite the Pullman program was allotted on October 30, 1940. My letters of August 6 and November 5 and subsequent correspondence explain that the limitations imposed upon the program by the 1939 allotment made it impossible to make effective use of the additional funds. Mr. Fieldner's letter

of August 21 indicated that Dr. Dean had convinced him that I was responsible for the "pressure which is being brought upon the Bureau of Mines for increasing the allotment." This is absolutely incorrect. I was not consulted in this matter either by State officials or by the Bureau.

It was not possible to fill the positions authorized under this deficiency appropriation. The allotment notice was received in November and selection by civil service usually takes several months. Such additions to my staff could not be continued after the end of the fiscal year without another deficiency appropriation.

The proposal to add a senior engineer to my staff when I had been denied that rating demonstrates an unsound policy, which is bound to provoke dissatisfaction.

During the past two years many prominent engineers and directors of large industrial enterprises or research laboratories have visited Pullman. Without exception they have expressed very favorable opinions regarding the work and the manner in which it has been carried out. As a result of these contacts I have received many hints that my services would be in demand and have had several definite and flattering offers of highly paid employment. The letter of Jan. 5, 1942, from T. E. Layng and my reply is a specific example.

My subordinates are loyal and diligent. Although they also have been tempted by outside opportunities and doubts regarding the future of this station, none except Mrs. Siren have resigned. Mrs. Siren resented her transfer to Pullman, and as associate at Salt Lake remarked: "So you are being put on the shelf too!" She was moved to make room for Emily McCaw (engaged to Dean's stepson).

With the exception of Dr. Dean I have had most pleasant associations in the Bureau. For more than twenty years my work has been rated satisfactory by my superiors, and I do not intend to leave the Bureau with the rating which is now on record. For five years I have held responsibilities that easily justify promotion to Senior Grade.

If I had purchased Dr. Dean's wholehearted support with patents, it would have been possible to conclude the present program a year sooner and the process would now be in commercial use.

I have endured a most difficult situation for nearly three years because of a strong desire to complete successfully a most valuable and interesting project. I do not intend to remain under Dr. Dean any longer than required for that objective.

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I request your influence not only to obtain a revision of my Service Rating but also a promotion long overdue. Even if the promotion did not take effect before a separation, it would be appreciated as evidence that my services have justified it.

Very truly yours,

H. A. Doerner
Engineer in Charge

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