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JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY TO HOLD  
HEARINGS ON ADDITIONAL URANIUM ENRICHMENT CAPABILITY

Congressman Melvin Price, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, announced today that Phase I of JCAE's promised hearings on the future structure of the uranium enrichment industry will begin at 10:00 a. m. on July 31st and continue for two or three days.

As indicated by Chairman Price, hearings on the subject will be conducted in two or more phases. Phase I will consist of public testimony by government witnesses updating all pertinent unclassified data on the subject of uranium enrichment, including enrichment supply and demand projections, processes, timing of increments of additional capacity, as well as current agency and Administration policies respecting existing and additional enrichment facilities.

AEC is being asked to release during Phase I hearings any additional presently classified data on enrichment that may be made public without endangering military security, encouraging proliferation or compromising United States commercial secrets.

AEC also is being requested to present all its data according to standard weights, measures and terminology. AEC is being asked to prepare, insofar as possible, its charts, graphs and other visual materials according to common scales which will facilitate comparison. For the same reason data furnished in chart or graph form are also being requested in tabular form.

The objective of the Phase I hearings is to consolidate and present in updated and easily comprehensible form all unclassified data pertaining to the enrichment of uranium which is essential for evaluating what future structure for the enrichment of uranium to meet domestic and foreign needs for nuclear fuel will best serve the national interests of the United States with due consideration for the needs of its historic overseas customers during the finite period for which there will be a substantial world demand for separative work.

Congressman Craig Hosmer, Ranking Minority House Member of the JCAE, stated that,

"Unlike the cases of previous hearings on this subject, data will be sought which should enable the Committee to gauge the proper priority and weight to be assigned to maximizing U. S. foreign exchange receipts from the sale of separative work services to foreign customers."

He added,

"This introduces an important new consideration not heretofore taken into account and which could be the determining factor in deciding whether the national interest will best be served by a governmental or a non-governmental structure for future uranium enrichment."

The Justice Department has been invited to testify on anti-trust factors which could be important to private firms or consortia, a semi-public corporation, a cooperative structure, government corporation, or other conceivable alternative for future ownership, financing and operation of either a competing or non-competing enrichment industry.

Phase II of the hearings is expected to be held in the fall following the August recess of Congress. Based on data accumulated during Phase I, industry, academic and public views on the future of enrichment will be invited. Persons desiring to testify should contact the Executive Director of the JCAE, Room H-403, U. S. Capitol. Potential private suppliers of enrichment services and representatives of customers for the services will be amongst those invited to testify. Other likely participants are individual utilities and reactor manufacturers. Foreign as well as U. S. witnesses will probably be invited because of the international nature of the uranium enrichment supply and demand equation.

Phase III hearings will depend on developments during Phases I and II. Phase III could be designed to set national policies on enrichment at an early date to reassure foreign and domestic utilities that no nuclear fuel gap will be tolerated and that provision will be made for new enrichment capacity to be on the line in ample time before demand on existing capacity is exceeded.

Today's announcement by Chairman Price is a refinement of the general hearing schedule mentioned in his May 4, 1973 letter to the Chairman of the AEC which stated in part,

"The necessity of obtaining additional enrichment capability is a matter of paramount interest and continuing concern. The Committee intends to hold additional hearings on this vital matter during the month of July."

That statement was released to the press on May 4, 1973 along with an announcement of the JCAE's disposition of its review of the proposed revisions to AEC's Uranium Enriching Services Criteria.

Chairman Price stated that Phase I and II hearings will be open to the general public and are scheduled to be held in the Joint Committee Public Hearing Room, S-407, in the U. S. Capitol. Chairman Price did note, however, there is a possibility that a classified session for testimony may be necessary in order that the Committee may have the full information available in this field of technology. If that should occur, the Committee intends to explore the feasibility of holding the classified session at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, or elsewhere where enrichment operations are performed.