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SCAG file

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4 June 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR AFSA-OOT

Subject: Conversation with Professor MacLane.

1. I succeeded in reaching Professor MacLane in Chicago by telephone at 2230 yesterday. Our conversation was rather extended because he raised a number of questions.
2. Professor MacLane said he had received my letter of 25 May and had written (but was not sure he had mailed) a reply, which he then summarized orally. Apparently he is not enthusiastic about the prospect of being invited to join SCAG, but from the tenor of his remarks I take it that he is open to persuasion.
3. The first question Professor MacLane raised was whether the work involved would be related to his mathematical interests, which are primarily in abstract algebra. His second question was: "How much time and energy would be required?" I endeavored to reassure him on both points, but was unable to be specific concerning the second. He then remarked, referring to his wartime experience with OSRD, "I was burnt once and I don't want to be burnt again." This remark, I believe, is related to his first question; apparently the work he was assigned to perform for OSRD was of a dull and routine nature, far removed from his mathematical interests.
4. Professor MacLane said he had been visited in Chicago by Professor J. W. T. Youngs, who is on leave of absence from Indiana University to work for the AEC. Professor Youngs is traveling around the country trying to enlist the services of outstanding mathematicians as AEC consultants. The technique of the personal visit (which, I am told, Professor von Neumann has recommended strongly to us) seems more likely to succeed than an approach by letter and telephone.
5. Professor MacLane showed no disposition to balk at filling out the Personal History Statement I sent him, but said he would need a little time to obtain some information for the "Residence since birth" item. He raised some questions concerning this item, which I answered to the best of my ability. When I first brought up the matter of fingerprints, early in the conversation, he suggested that we wait until he had thought the matter over and decided what his attitude would be toward a formal invitation to join SCAG. Later, however, when I suggested that having a clearance on file would be advantageous to him if he decided to participate in any sort of defense work, he consented to have his prints taken.

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 04-14-2014 pursuant to E.O. 13526

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6. Saunders MacLane is one of the world's leading algebraists; I can think of only two or three men in America (all born in Central Europe) who might be held to outrank him in this field. He has an extraordinarily fertile and original mind, and in my opinion, and that of other AFSA mathematicians, we should be extremely fortunate to obtain his services as a member of SCAG. Attached hereto is a tentative draft of two paragraphs of a letter I recommend sending to Professor MacLane after his written reply to my letter of 25 May has been received; I think another paragraph should be added to this letter, in which some indication should be given of the amount of time that members of SCAG would be expected to devote to our problems.

*D. D. Miller*D. D. MILLER  
LCDR, USNCopies to:  
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## T E N T A T I V E

Dear Saunders,

Time was too limited during our telephone conversation Sunday night for me to say much in detail about the questions you raised. And, of course, there are always the frustrating but really necessary security restrictions.

The is one point, however, on which I want to reassure you. We do not deal with dirty differential equations, and in general our problems are not amenable to the methods of what is usually called "applied mathematics". Among the mathematicians now devoting full time to these problems are algebraists of good repute (Howie Campaigne, Al Clifford, Marshall Hall). Our great and pressing need is for abstract thinking of the highest order, for ideas rather than mere technical facility.

(# Insert Paragraph on time required of SCAG members).

Sincerely,

*Dan*

~~D. D. MILLER~~  
~~LCDR, USN~~