September 16, 1971

Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Chairman
United States Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Dr. Schlesinger:

Several years ago it was announced by the President and by the Atomic Energy Commission that, upon completion of the Accelerator at Batavia, Illinois, the Laboratory would be named in honor of Enrico Fermi. Several different possible names were mentioned under different circumstances at that time.

Dr. Robert Wilson, the Director of the Laboratory, and I have discussed possible names for the Laboratory with a number of scientists. We would recommend that at the time the name is changed, it should be changed to Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory.

Fermi was such a great and well known physicist that it is completely unnecessary to use his first name in the designation of a scientific laboratory; in fact, the use of his first name in that connection somewhat detracts from his greatness by suggesting the necessity for using his first name to distinguish him from a comparably great physicist with whom he might be confused. In physics, there is only one Fermi of his stature.

The inclusion of the word "Accelerator" in the title should do much to reduce possible confusion with and possible resentment from existing Fermi laboratories, especially those in the Chicago area. When the announcement was first made that the Laboratory would be named in honor of Fermi, strong objections were voiced by various members of the Fermi Institute at the University of Chicago, who felt that considerable confusion might be produced with their Institute and laboratories if the National Accelerator Laboratory were called a name such as the Enrico Fermi Laboratory. Since Fermi, himself, had for many years been the leading member of their own laboratory, they felt it was particularly appropriate that his name should continue to be attached to the Fermi Institute. I believe that the more specific title which Dr. Wilson and I favor would do much to overcome the objections from the Fermi Institute and to avoid confusion with that Institute as well as with the Fermi Reactor.

Sincerely yours,

Norman F. Ramsey
President

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