

MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT FÜR MOLEKULARE GENETIK

Abt. TRAUTNER

1 BERLIN 33 (DAHLEM) 12 July 1979
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C o n f i d e n t i a l

Professor Paul Berg
Department of Biochemistry
Stanford University
Palo Alto, Calif. 94305

U.S.A.

Dear Paul:

As you may know, also in this country there is an extensive discussion going on about the pro's and con's and dangers of gene technology. Experiments in gene technology in this country have to be approved by a Federal Committee consisting of scientists and other people from various parts of the community. I am a member of this committee. The rules governing experiments in gene technology operate on a voluntary basis. All research funded by Federal or State funds is contingent on the acceptance of these rules. The pharmaceutical industry has also agreed to abide to these rules. The committee is unanimous in the opinion that the existing rules, with their potential to become quickly adjusted to new developments in the field are at this stage sufficient in their control of gene technology. However the Federal government does very strongly pursue the idea that such rules should become a law. The scientific community in this country and again the Committee feel that legislation controlling gene technology is not in proportion to the actual risks of such research. The Federal Government on the other hand does not accept these arguments. There is a very strong political motivation by the Federal Minister of Research and his administration to introduce a draft for a law into parliament. Motives for this political argumentation are very similar to those which have existed in the U.S.

At this stage the Federal Government is planning to hold a hearing on the potential risks and benefits of gene technology. This hearing is to take place in the middle of September. I understand that you and also Stan Cohen have been invited to testify at this hearing. I also know that King, Beckwith, Chargaff and Sinsheimer have accepted invitations to come to the hearing. Professor Koch, who is the chairman of the Federal Committee on Recombinant Research has told me that neither you nor Stan Cohen could come to Bonn on this occasion.

My feeling is that your presence at the hearing would be extremely beneficial for the free development and pursuit of gene technology in this country. Therefore I am writing to you to ask whether you could not after all arrange it to come to the hearing.

I am sending an identical letter to Stan Cohen.

With my best regards,

Yours,



T. A. Trautner