

# STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

## DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

June 8, 1977

Professor Norton D. Zinder  
1230 York Avenue  
New York, New York 10021

Dear Norton:

I was very glad to have the candid snapshot of your trip to China. I was sorry what you had to report about C. C. Tan. The many different levels at which he must have suffered during these past years are more than I can comprehend.

But rather than try to pursue this now, I hope it will be possible to follow through on your making a visit here as you had suggested. I have talked to Doug Murray, who directs our U.S.-China Studies Program, and have asked him to get in touch with you about setting possible dates for an informal discussion with you. I am sure this would be of great interest to a number of people in that group here at Stanford. That would give us an excellent opportunity to go over a lot of things that now are on our common agenda.

Well, I can see that we are both still pretty upset about what's going on in the DNA regulation arena. I don't think that blowing the lid off would be particularly helpful in the long run; and the very painstaking and patient effort at educating the relevant people in Congress does seem like the only hope. "I told you so" is the furthest thing from my mind, Norton. What has been happening just hurts too much to even think of dealing with it at that level.

The latest wrinkle is that the transfer of plasmids from staphylococcus to bacillus has been criticized as "an evasion" of the guidelines, and I gather there is a committee at NIH studying whether or not to incorporate transformation, and I suppose cross-breeding, within the framework of the regulation.

The modest proposal that I intend to surface pretty soon is that Congress should solve all of our problems in this area by a series of legislative enactments. They repeal the law  $E = MC^2$ , and thereby solve the problem of nuclear proliferation; and legislate against the natural

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occurrence of microbial evolution and pathogenicity and solve most of our biological problems to boot.

Not that all of our problems come from Congress: our own colleagues have their own particular diseases. Now that, six months later, I finally did get a somewhat more encouraging vote I can share with you my own most recent encounter with peer review (enclosed).

Well, on top of every other good reason to look forward to getting together, misery loves company so I hope that the opportunity will materialize.

I will be at a meeting at Rutgers the first week in July and am trying hard to fix up my schedule to be able to come to New York at least for a day or so. I will let you know.

All the best,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

Enclosure

JL:ek-f