April 30, 1952

Dear Dr. Nobel:

A few days ago, I received the sad word from the Rockefeller Foundation that they would be unable to sponsor your projected visit to this country. Needless to say, I was greatly disappointed, but one can well imagine the intense competition for never adequate funds. I do hope that this does not close the door on your interest and efforts in this direction. Have you made any enqmiries concerning other subsidies? Several of your compatriots have been travelling on W.H.O. grants; another (Bruce Stocker) who will be visiting here for a few weeks has had a Commonwealth Fund support.

As to the possibility of a "contribution" here, I think I may already have indicated that we could not ourselves arrange for your travel expenses. If you could find these elsewhere, it might be possible to create a temporary appointment here, for a period of two or three months, as a "Research Associate" or "Project Associate". By American academic standards, the stipend would be very low, probably about $300 per month, but would provide very comfortably for your maintenance, and beyond. As there would be a considerable amount of red tape (on my part) to release these funds, I would prefer to use them only as a last resort. This is intended as an encouragement, not a dissuasion, and I would count myself fortunate to be able to use them if you could not make an alterhative arrangement.

I have been starting some cytological work myself re K-12 zygotes. Under conditions (or rather with strains) showing very favorable frequencies of genetic recombination, I have not found the distinctive structures figured in your last letter. Would you care to comment any further on them? With living material, I have seen associations of cells like those pictured with your letter of December 20. I think they may be indeed significant, but this will be difficult to verify. I have not seen L-forms at all under these conditions, and suspect that E. coli may show conjugation rather than copulation.

On the other hand, quite by accident I think I may have stumbled upon a simple method of eliciting L-forms. For some ether work on Salmonella motility I had been using semi-solid agar (per liter, peptone 10g., yeast extr. 3; gelatin 80; agar 4 and salt 5). With every Salmonella culture examined, the swarming outgrowth is peppered with L-type colonies! If this is transferred to the same medium with penicillin, the bacillary forms are suppressed. E. coli K-12 and B (non-motile) have given much the same result, though less conspicuously. As to why this has been overlooked, I can only suggest that the L-colonies are practically invisible except under phase microscopy. These observations are only a few days old, so I can not have much more to say, but I am very doubtful of any genetic significance of them (which is not to minimize their importance for other areas of microbiology.!)

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg