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RESEARCH CORPORATION

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KENDALL W. KING
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT—GRANTS

August 28, 1969

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Dr. Hal H. Ramsey, this foundation's Western Regional Director, occasionally sends me clippings of your Science and Man articles from the Chronicle. I have enjoyed them doubly because of their airing of crucial contemporary problems relating to the position of science in society as a whole and because of their jogging of my memory of the early 50's when your course at Madison in Microbiol Genetics was the intellectual delight of my graduate work. You have my belated thanks.

Without implying it to be in any sense the exclusive cause of the abuse of science in the contemporary scene, it has seemed increasingly clear to me that one major facet of the problem is the intellectual isolation of scientists-in-training from both the general world of thought and from the common affairs of society. Beginning in the late undergraduate years and throughout graduate and postdoctoral education the vast majority of our scientists devote essentially all of their efforts to the narrow subject matter of their fields. If they take time for general reading, reflection and thought it is stolen.

The end result is a man astonishingly naive in the areas of philosophy, ethics, and the humanities and incapable of understanding economic and political thought. He is inarticulate with most of the world, and really has little to say of any substance because of 10-odd years of disassociation with the non-scientific world.

Sometime around 35 or 40 he begins intuitively to wonder at society's misuse of science and to chafe under his own incapacity to find means by which he and his discipline can gain relevance and power.

Dr. Joshua Lederberg

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It seems to me important that this deficit in science education be corrected and that a foundation such as ours ought to be in the best possible position to implement experiments in that direction.

I would be keenly interested in your reaction to both whether the general gist of my thought is valid, and if so what moves in a constructive direction might be appropriate to foundations.

Sincerely yours,



Kendall W. King

KWK:JE

cc: Dr. H. H. Ramsey