

SSB Com 15

September 30, 1960

Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner, Chairman
Space Science Board
President, Associated Universities, Inc.
10 Columbus Circle
New York 19, New York

Dear Lloyd:

I can acknowledge the meeting that has been arranged for Sunday evening, October 16th at the Rockefeller Institute to discuss Space Board problems in biology. My plane is due to arrive at about 4:30 and it is therefore quite likely that I will be just a little late; I will try to call in to the Rockefeller Institute switchboard if there is any undue delay. Because I may be a bit late, I think it may be useful for me to communicate my own reactions to the correspondence between you and Dr. Cannon concerning space biology. In his letter of September 22, of which I have a mimeographed copy, Dr. Cannon put it very well - that I am quite deeply involved with exobiology (in addition to my other academic and research responsibilities) and have neither the time nor, may I say, the inclination to become involved in other aspects of applied biology. I had thought that the establishment of our three committees would solve all the problems that Dr. Cannon has in mind. I myself can see no rationale for an elaborate superstructure of biology, any more than you have one for the physical sciences and their concern in space. In any case, I would suggest that exobiology has deeper interests in common with the Committees on Planetary Exploration and Chemistry and Planetary Atmospheres than it does with the principal disciplines for which the Bioastronautics Committee had been established originally. Let me summarize my reaction then, that I do not favor the establishment of an overall life sciences committee; that if one is formed, I would be unable to accept any additional responsibilities in connection with it; and that in any case, exobiology be dissociated from its implied jurisdiction.

Naturally, these are just the questions we are going to be talking about but I mention them in this letter on the chance that I might be late and in hopes that you will not have pre-judged this position before I join the group.

Things are just beginning to move seriously on the experimental side now, for the development of exobial detectors and I'm just beginning to have some confidence that we may be able to have useful experiments ready in time.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics