MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
E53-421

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

April 22, 1969

Professor Joshua Lederberg
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford Medical Center
300 Pasteur Drive
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Enclosed is the reprint you requested.

I must comment on your Washington Post column of March 22, 1969, which I found disappointing. You dismissed my fluoridation hypothesis off handedly without considering the evidence. You then fail to see that all elections involve a potential suppression of a minority. Moreover, the literature in political science does not support your interpretation of the conflict between the liberty of the individual and the liberty of the community which can be described as the conflict between private regarding and public regarding attitudes. Studies indicate that private regarding attitudes are dominant. In the fluoridation controversy people would most likely then be calculating their own advantages and disadvantages rather than those that accrue to the community.

Sincerely,

Harvey M. Sapolsky/jk

Harvey M. Sapolsky

I have to accept your criticism, and would admit that I would have dealt more comprehensively with your thesis were there space. My interpretation of the "votes" is admittedly almost entirely intuitive, and based on discussions I have heard around Stanford. *However, there are also few issues that elicit technical unanimity, so I am not sure that fluoridation is typical of political decision-making. Why not research the very point, whether votes reflect private anxieties or public-regarding attitudes in this particular arena. Many of my undecided friends point to the availibity of fluoride by other routes as an important argument.

Sincerely
Joshua Lederberg.

*To regard to your own theses