

April 14, 1970

Dr. Fred L. Soper
4104 Rosemary Street
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20015

Dear Dr. Soper:

I very much appreciate your critical and constructive comments. Some of the faults of the pieces I had written I might shrug aside as inevitable in such an abbreviated article, but it is certainly true that there were several matters on which I had an insufficiently sharp focus, and I was quite delighted to be brought short on them.

A newspaper column does not allow much latitude for corrections of detail, but I will shortly be preparing a set of my columns for publication in book form. Would you be agreeable to my incorporating part of your letter as a corrective comment?

Might I urge you to write you the "Textbook" on yellow fever for which you would be so uniquely qualified? I find that we are in a very small minority to share an urgent concern about the recrudescence of major epidemics, and I think it is most vital to reawaken the interest of a broader community on these matters. The relative silence of the public health officialdom has generated a very pervasive but, I think we must both agree, a totally unwarranted sense of complacency.

I am sure there must be many people who would welcome, as much as I, an authoritative exposition at a semi-technical level, like that of your letter.

Has Aedes aegypti in fact been literally eradicated in Mexico or in Brazil? I would be grateful if you could point me to the appropriate literature to substantiate eradication to a level of rigor such that one would insist that any specimen was necessarily a reintroduction. I offer this comment in all innocence - some of my ecological friends have insisted to me that no invertebrate pest had ever been intentionally eradicated over a significantly large area. Do you see any prospect of getting sufficient cooperation from the other hold-outs in and around the Caribbean to warrant a final conclusive effort on our own territory?

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

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P.S. I would be very pleased were you to recast your letter to me in the form of a letter to the editor of the Washington Post, which should have a high probability of being accepted for publication in what is, as you know, an influential community. I would even be glad to be the stalking horse for a public expression of the same criticism you were courteous enough to send me privately; others might be confused into believing that this was a polemic, however, and I think you could make the same points even more effective by describing them as an amplification of the remarks in my own column. Space is an eternal problem, and a piece not longer than my own column would stand the most chance of being taken up for publication.

Joshua Lederberg