

May 24, 1967

Mr. Leon Shimkin, President  
Simon & Schuster, Inc.  
630 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10020

Dear Mr. Shimkin:

For some time I have been writing a commentary on science and human affairs which appears weekly in The Washington Post and has begun to be syndicated to some other newspapers throughout the world. I have also had in mind the possibility of collecting these contributions from time to time for a more durable form of publication, preferably a paperback which might be available through both trade and college book channels. Much of the impetus for the treatment of this subject is expressed in a course that I give to Stanford undergraduates, and a number of instructors have commented that they would find some source material extremely useful if they were to attempt a similar treatment.

You already have guessed that I am asking you to consider this project for publication under your own imprint. I have already been approached by a number of other publishers, but before making a decision on such an important question I thought I should invite a few comments on my own initiative. If you were interested in this project I would first of all ask your advice on certain options; for example, the most appropriate size for the first book of this kind, keeping in mind the possibility of further collections in the future if my ideas don't run out.

I am enclosing a number of the columns that have appeared during the last year, together with a sample of some other writings of similar intent but different format. What I had in mind for a book is a collection that would consist almost entirely of this material, which has been published previously in separate form. I would make a modest number of editorial changes and annotations, and in some cases furnish reference bibliography. I had in mind to organize the various articles under perhaps half a dozen subject headings, and to write some introductory material for each of these chapters. In addition, I would put in a preface or a biographical note, or some sort of apologia for being involved in this kind of writing.

My main concern is to promote the distribution of the book to the several audiences that might be interested in it, and at the same time retain the utmost dignity and restraint in the advertising and the appearance of the book.

I would very much appreciate the courtesy of an early reply, if this is possible, since I may have to fend off some alternative options. I will, however, be out of the country until June 7.


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I would be quite prepared to heed good advice on whether to proceed fairly soon, or to continue to accumulate a number of additional pieces before collecting them for a book. I would, I believe, be able to complete the necessary editorial work comfortably within sixty days, and possibly within thirty, after agreeing upon a cut-off date.

Sincerely yours,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

Dictated but not read by Dr. Lederberg

Enclosures