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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
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In reply refer to:
NBI-D

MASLAND

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

Dear Josh:

This year the NINDB, along with the other Institutes of the NIH, is experiencing a serious limitation of the funds available for research and research training. We anticipate that at the end of this year, given the President's budget, there will remain unpaid approved applications in excess of \$6 million. I have just learned that, at best, an additional \$2 million restriction is likely to be imposed on our expenditures. It is my impression that others of the National Institutes of Health will experience even more severe restrictions of funds.

I recently attended an informal talk by a member of the President's Office of Science and Technology, whose impression is that the restrictions of research expenditures by the U.S. Government will become worse, and that changes in the U.S. commitment in Viet Nam are not the major issue and would not significantly influence this trend.

According to his views, the negativity of the Congress this year is simply a reflection of needed emerging attitudes on the part of the public which has become disillusioned with foreign aid, commerce, economic opportunity, and medical research. In his views, the NIH and the academic community have failed to inform the public of the crucial role that the Federal Government and the National Institutes of Health are playing in a major program to meet a National need. It is these considerations which are causing me serious concern and which have induced me to write to you regarding your very interesting and informative article on birthweight. I am enclosing a copy.

Frankly, I was disappointed that in this article you did not take advantage of the several opportunities to give the Federal Government

Dear Dick - You are absolutely right. Perhaps I should focus a column on just this question! Can you dig out some report that concentrates the factual statistics to measure the role

of NIH suggest in U.S. and world research

How/ frame this, any of the sources? M. Masland's public information?

J. Lederberg

credit for its efforts in the area of birthweight research. I am sure that your failure to do so was an oversight.

Specifically, you write that, "... until statistical studies... showed that certain forms of blindness...were caused by excessive exposure to oxygen..." To my knowledge the only statistical studies which documented this fact were those developed, organized, and supported by the NINDB. This undertaking represented a single contribution by the Institutes to the Nation's health.

You further report that "Special nurseries for research on prematurity have been established at many university hospitals." It is my impression that these are largely supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Certainly their success will depend upon a continued infusion of finances from the Federal Government.

Finally you refer to the fact that Professor Norman Kretchmer has established a center at Stanford. It is my impression that the center at Stanford represents an interesting, cooperative undertaking involving Stanford University, the Kennedy Foundation, and various elements of the Federal Government.

You may properly respond that your responsibility in this column is to prepare a scientific report to the public, and that concern is only with the facts. I would like to suggest, however, that it is just as important to the public, and more important to science, for the public to be aware of the fact that the studies which you have described are made possible through their contribution to the national research effort. In fact, if the present trend continues there will be less and less in the way of research and research accomplishments for us to talk about. It is later than you think.

Sincerely yours,

Rick

Richard L. Masland, M.D.
Director, National Institute of
Neurological Diseases and Blindness

Enclosure