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THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

pro bono humani generis

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Dear Harriet:

(Please hold in confidence; but by all means suggest whom else you would commend to receive the same questions).

The challenge has been thrust on me to advise on the establishment of a center for study of global problems in Paris. I am pursuing it with the CASBS very much in mind as an exemplar, particularly wrt to its initial charter. It will, however, be intrinsically much broader, in fact with its main center of gravity humanistic culture, but with ancillary representation from the social and natural sciences. So it may have as much to do with Dickens, Ibsen, Picasso, Beethoven and Freud, as with formal policy analysis; with Gordimer as much as Moynihan. But not to exclude the latter!

The current task is to suggest a notional Board of Trustees, whose qualifications should include

- a) common sense about the oversight of such a center, including the definition of study programs and selection of permanent staff and visiting fellows
- b) explicit qualifications of personal scholarship, moral commitment and practical statesmanship
- c) symbolic visibility and prestige, and capacity to represent global humanity.

If you were starting from scratch, whom would you nominate for such distinction cum pragmatic functionality for such a board? Think of a Sakharov, an Einstein or a Szilard; or a Niebuhr or a Myrdal. Disregard any consideration of availability (I don't mean beyond the grave, as my examples, alas, would suggest.) I should think current officers of government (a Havel) would not be appropriate; but let us at least have even such names in mind.

The board would not be precluded from taking current active roles, but would rely mostly on ad hoc groups like the special projects at CASBS.

I can't say what the odds are, but there are prospects of unprecedented backing and standing for this initiative. It may happen in any event, and of course might be a grand fiasco if not carefully tended, and with particular care to avert pomposity.

I'll be back to ask you and Bob about it. Do give it some thought meanwhile.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

P.S. Annie has decided on Harvard, after very careful deliberation.