

27th January 1957

Bennett

Dear Josh,

Thank you for your letter of the 24th. I had not realised that my few tentative enquiries as to possible openings for me in the United States had reached you in Madison. However, your suppositions are correct and I have decided to cut my losses over here and try to get started in the US. My situation is certainly not desperate and I am certainly going to think most carefully before making definite applications, let alone before accepting, any given position. There is a fairly widespread feeling of despair amongst several groups here which is not improving as time goes on. I don't think that your suggestion of an improvement in the near future is justified here. The academic market is much more stagnant than in the US and prospects are very much a matter of 'dead man's shoes' - the prospective 'bulge' shows no sign of affecting this other than, possibly, for physicists and such allied branches.

Your offer of assistance is most gratefully accepted and I think that it might be helpful if I answered your queries roughly seriatim. My requirements are not too rigid. I would like to be able to utilise my qualifications, such as they are, i.e. I would like to continue in microbiology utilising if possible my knowledge of phage and of genetics. I don't mind a moderately routine situation so long, however, as I can have a moderate amount of time to follow my own bent. The major part of my training has, of course, been in medical and public health bacteriology and it might be that something in that sphere would be most suitable. I have no very firm ideas as to location excepting that I am not very keen, nor is Helen, on either the east or west coasts. This however leaves a vast area between.

If I came I would be coming on an immigrant visa which I do not think I would have too much difficulty in obtaining.

I am not certain whether you will have heard that Helen is due to have a baby sometime in the period April-May. This leads directly on to two of your other questions. She will most certainly not be working full-time after her thesis is completed (shortly we hope), nor is she likely to be interested in part-time work for some time in the future. It also means that we would not be wanting to leave here for some few months after. We had been thinking of Sept-Oct. as an early limit.

A pre-visit is, I'm afraid, out of the question for two main reasons. Firstly, although possibly an investment I could not consider it financially. Secondly, I would not be able to get leave of absence for it, most certainly not if it was realised that it was to be a prospecting tour. My intentions to move are not too widely publicised here, Andy knows, but no-one else in the PHLS hierarchy, and until such time as I have to submit formal notice (3 mths) I'd prefer to keep it that way.

As I had said earlier I have made, as yet, no applications for any position. There is one that I have been considering. This I heard of from Bill Hayes and is at the University of Kansas. Possibly you have heard of it. It is for somebody to take bacterial genetics and cytology, two branches which are, they say, as yet uncovered in their course. However, the departmental chairman, Paretsky, states that they are really looking for somebody very junior, a fresh Ph.D., and hence are not willing to give more than a low starting salary or status. I will have to make a decision as to applying very shortly - applications are to be in by March - and wonder what you think of it.

We heard from Nancy Millis at Christmastime. She told us that your course and seminars were greatly appreciated in Melbourne. I should imagine that you must have had a fairly enjoyable but rather busy tour there and back. The settling down afterwards is always a little difficult but if you already feel that the trip was remote you must certainly be back in the thick of routine.

We are both well here. Helen is busy writing her thesis against the deadline of the impending birth and we are hoping that she makes it in time.
Best wishes to Esther and also to Jim Crow,

Yours,
Alek

[Faint, mostly illegible typed text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]