



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON

JUN 10 1963

June 6, 1963

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I have given your letter of May 17 a careful and thoughtful reading.

You can appreciate my difficulty in making a helpful reply--because you are dealing with a rather pervasive characteristic of our time. I also chafe at some of the same conditions that hamper originality and effective action.

On a recent plane trip I was talking with an airplane instruments man who had been in the business over 30 years. He recalled the time when his company could arrange with Wright Field for a test flight of a new instrument within a few days. Now, he says, it takes 18 months and prolonged paper work to accomplish the same thing. This man had allotted for this particular trip 3 days to do what should have been done in 3 hours.

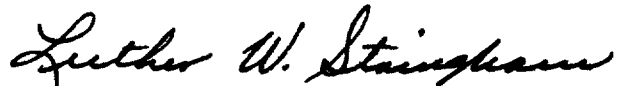
Many years ago I had an exposure to some of the literature in "public administration" and other aspects of the art of management. I think countless sins are committed in the name of good management by people who have so little appreciation for substantive matters.

I do not see any way of changing this situation appreciably, but I do think that we can generate a new breed of people who can learn the administrative procedures and who still can fervently believe that substantive progress is the only worthwhile goal. Such persons can be of great help to creative persons in taking off the load imposed by the administrative aspects of their work. How the creative scientist can find and work with such an individual, of course, poses a great problem, but I think that the only solution lies in this direction.

I have had to face these problems personally in serving as Chairman of the Secretary's Committee on Mental Retardation. In that job I have decided to try to be more than a figurehead administrator--which explains why I gave so much energy to the preparation of the California talk that impelled you to write to me. Another speech will be coming along shortly on the subject of "Federal Services in the Field of Mental Retardation." Thus, I have tried to keep one foot on the administrative horse and one foot on the substantive horse, without being split down the middle.

I very much hope to have the opportunity to philosophize with you in person some day soon. I am tremendously interested in the fields of genetics and molecular biology. I have just finished the struggle through Asimov's recent book on The Genetic Code and I now have on my desk Steinberg's Progress in Medical Genetics. I would be extremely grateful if you could send me reprints of your papers that I could study in the months to come.

Sincerely yours,



Luther W. Stringham
Assistant to the
Assistant Secretary

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