

September 23, 1976

↓  
Ambassador Joseph Martin, Jr.  
Delegation of the United States of America  
to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament  
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Joe,

Thank you so much for sending me the verbatim record as well as the statement that you submitted at the CCD that referred to my speech in 1970 and to the problem of "recombinant DNA".

I guess I am really puzzled, who could have believed that there was any question about the BW Treaty covering new biological agents, however they might be generated. Was there in fact any tangible hint from any source whatsoever that such a doubt existed?

I suppose the history of the Geneva Protocol shows that treaty language is sometimes ambiguous about unanticipated technical developments. (For example, the tear gas, herbicide questions). However, the plain language of the BW Treaty seems so clear that I wondered what the issue was really about since it seemed hardly likely that there could be any alternative interpretation, quite regardless of the background legislative history.

I guess, the other point is that when people get exercised and excited about an issue, they may need redundant reassurances.

Good luck,

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr