

August 22, 1969

Mr. Paul N. McCloskey
141 Borel Avenue
San Mateo, California 94402

Dear Mr. McCloskey,

Thank you for your note of August 6th. I would be very happy to organize another meeting of the Stanford Advisory group at the usual place, Tresidder Union, at 8:30 AM Friday October 10th. If there are any things particularly on your mind, please do let me know and conversely I will try to organize some sort of preliminary agenda. In fact, if you would like to take up the question of "racial hereditary factors" I would be happy to get a group together that would focus on this subject.

I am grateful for the invitation to appear before the Republican Task Force on Population Planning and I hope I may have an opportunity to do so at some future date. I am afraid I will not be able to come to Washington in early September.

I am afraid that the Academy's position on this subject may have been presented somewhat ambiguously and I can certainly tell you what my own is. We ought to have no hesitation in supporting good research that had any reasonable prospect of giving scientifically sound answers on racial differences. The kind of methodology that Shockley and to a lesser extent Jensen had been proposing is so flimsy that many people, including myself, believe that it is likely to do much more harm than good just in terms of any prospective clarification of the basic issues. There is on the other hand a lot of work already going on and, of course, there should be much more on the identification of individual genetic factors that can influence intellectual development including those which show some difference in frequency among the races. At the present time no one knows how to do a critical experiment that can answer questions about inherent biological ability along racial lines that would isolate the determination from the prejudices of the investigator and of the community in which people actually develop. As we learn more about the biochemistry of the development of the brain which many of us are working hard to do, we may eventually come to the possibility of answering these kinds of questions. I am becoming more and more impressed with evidence for prenatal influences, especially nutritional on brain development and there is even some reason to expect some of these effects of inadequate digestion to impair the ability of the offspring to function as effective mothers.

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I am enclosing a few notes on this subject that I hope you can take the time to go into and I believe they do not require as much scientific training as their ~~form~~ formidable titles might indicate. Also, if you could communicate these remarks to your task force I would be most appreciative.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

Enclosures
JL/rr

*Received
January 1967*