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January 29, 1979

Twice this week, Dick Atkinson (NSF Director) told me that Paul Berg and a few others were urging NSF to refuse to follow the NIH Recombinant DNA Guidelines as a "protest against the manner in which the RAC was handled." On Wednesday afternoon Omenn (OSTP), Alex Rich (MIT-NSF Board), George Pimental, Deputy Director of NSF and I discussed this "insurrection". I urged them not try to "secede from the Union" for the result would be a Presidential order and a law. Secondly, I told them to keep their cool, since they might need to react if the new RAC failed to function. (I've also been drafting a response for JAC, Jr. to a letter from Handler [President of NAS] in which he objects to the manner in which the RAC was appointed . I've stressed the need to experiment here (and only in the case of the RAC) with compressing the usual NIH 2-tier review system into one tier. I'm also testing JAC's acceptance of this idea, i.e "is he persuaded that NIH's peer review is, in the main, the best." We'll see how his staff reacts to this kind of language in the draft letter.