

April 13, 1963

Dr. Jerome Wiesner
Office of the Science Adviser to the President
Executive Office Building
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Jerry:

Paul Doty probably forwarded a copy of the enclosed some months ago; it will appear shortly in Nature.

Having reflected further on "euphenics" for some months, I find my own judgment has not altered (except to be more fixed, perhaps less fresh) over the urgency of the issues. There is a political angle that I think should have your attention.

It struck me only lately that the Russians have had an almost morbid interest in organ transplantation for some years. Their two-headed dogs have perhaps been scientifically as useless as they are grotesque; on the other hand they also speak for a high degree of straight technical skill. One of the strongest enclaves of Soviet-Bloc biology is the Prague group (Hasek, Haskova, Sterzl, Holub, Jaroskova....) which is doing excellent work in tissue transplantation. But for the most part, Western scientists have been answering the fundamental scientific problems in the field. The Russians have also had an unusual position in surgical instrumentation, as you probably know. This uneven performance makes me speculate whether they aren't making a much stronger push in "biological engineering" than we might suspect. Their whole system would certainly be geared to much more aggressive application of "euphenic" principles than ours.

The possible political concern might arise, if for example, they came out with the engineering of an artificial heart, and sprung it on the world much as they did their Sputnik. And you can see the propaganda... while the US war-mongers were diverting their technology to military uses, etc....

Action? I think there are plenty of reasons to study this problem without dragging in the cold war. But I don't think you would want to be caught unawares, so you might want a more thorough intelligence evaluation from sources you well know how to enlist.

As ever,

Joshua Lederberg

P.S. In the long run, would there be any appreciable social support for science at all without the pressure of social conflict?

PSAC — WIESNER