



UNITED STATES  
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

July 30, 1970

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Josh:

Thanks for sending me the preprint of your column a few days ago in which you estimated mutational effects from radiation exposure. I have not yet had to deal with any repercussions from the column but I rather think that they will be coming.

Let me be sure I understand how you reached your estimate of ten billion dollars per year. If the 10% increase in mutations with exposures at the permissible limits added this amount to the present bill I believe you are saying the health cost of mutation related diseases are about one hundred billion per year. Is this correct? One-ninth of our gross national product is being devoted to mutation related diseases and if these are 25% of the total number of diseases then that would be almost one-half of our GNP being spent for health. Obviously this looks like an improper interpretation of what you meant but I am afraid it will be one which we will see in our incoming mail.

It is too bad, of course, as you have pointed out that there is a continuing decline of funds available for support of various laboratories. It does not appear that there will likely be any change in this situation in the near future and I suspect that any extensive efforts by scientists to change the trend by political agitation may result in an acceleration of the loss of revenue.

On the subject of Gofman and Tamplin, I am enclosing a copy of the Washington Star article that indicates that they believe that you are a strong supporter of their estimates. Do you really wish them to classify you in this manner?

Dr. Joshua Lederberg

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Thanks again for letting me see your column before it appeared.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John".

John R. Totter, Director  
Division of Biology and Medicine

Enclosure:  
As Stated