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DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

PAUL BERG  
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July 25, 1979

Dr. T. A. Trautner  
Max-Planck-Institut  
fur Molekulare Genetik  
InnestraBe 63-73  
1 Berlin 33 (DAHLEM)  
Germany

Dear Tom,

I'm sorry that I can not participate in the hearings on recombinant DNA regulations that will be held in Bonn during September 19-21. I have only just returned from ten days abroad and must go again shortly. This extensive traveling is playing havoc with my existence and I must reduce the number of obligations and undertakings I accept. I hope you will understand.

Very frankly I'm astonished at the state of affairs you describe. Now, when virtually every advanced technological nation is moving towards a relaxation of guidelines of this field of research it seems short-sighted and ill-advised for the West German government to enact legislation to control recombinant DNA research. It will surely set back progress of this promising line of biological research in Germany. Such governmental action is very likely to attract ridicule and derision from most serious scientists and further embolden those who are using this issue for their own political purposes or as a means to expressing their own personal insecurities.

In lieu of my personal appearance I am sending a letter to Professor Koch, Chairman of The Federal Committee on Recombinant DNA Research, summarizing my views on this subject. I also include a copy of a letter I wrote awhile back to Senator Harrison Schmitt when he served on a U.S. Senate Committee that held hearings on the advisability of legislating recombinant DNA research rules. Interestingly enough those in the U.S. Congress who were in favor of legislation backed off when they came to understand the issue better. I wonder if the German Governmental Committee has studied the extensive testimony on this question that has accumulated during the past few years. Perhaps they should, as it certainly persuaded our law-makers of the folly of government intervention in this area of scientific work. I am astonished that a nation which has resisted legislative restraints on

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driving speeds on its highways would be spending precious time considering laws to control a far more benign activity. I suspect that unlimited speed on your autobahns is far more dangerous to the German citizen's health than recombinant DNA research will ever be.

You might want to consider several other people to testify at the hearings. I would suggest you ask Norton Zinder; besides having been one of the original signers of The Science Letter etc. he has had considerable experience in the public policy debate and has been particularly effective with Congressional and New York State legislative committees. Another person is Jim Watson; he's a bit more emphatic and colorful in the way he expresses his views but maybe that's what the politicians need to hear. Also I would suggest Charles Weismann; he spoke effectively to the public in Berlin and made a good impression. Dave Baltimore is another outstanding candidate. He serves on the U.S. Recombinant DNA Committee and has been involved from The Moratorium Letter to the present. There are undoubtedly others. I wish you luck.

With best regards,

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

PB:vs