

August 8, 1977

The Honorable Paul N. McCloskey
305 Grant Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94306

Dear Pete:

I am grateful for what I take to be your interest in putting a brake on recombinant DNA legislation. Already, the misguided features of the Kennedy bill in the Senate are widely appreciated. Senator Gaylord Nelson has made it very clear that the need to regulate industrial activity is already met by available Federal statutes and that repressive state and local statutes can be preempted without imposing equally foolish Federal laws.

You sent me the "Backgrounder on Recombinant DNA Research" (prepared by John Bartenstein, July 20, 1977). I cannot answer it point by point as you asked me to. I find the whole tone and substance of this essay to be so grossly inept that analysis of its details seems futile. To begin with the very first sentence:

There was no major breakthrough at Stanford in 1973! What Stanley Cohen achieved was a significant step in an orderly train of research that can be traced accurately for at least the past 25 to 50 years. The enzymes basic to recombinant DNA research had been known for many years and their application to joining chromosomal fragments was an inevitable link in our attempt to understand the hereditary and metabolic machinery of the cell. Congress could retard this march of science in the U. S. , as Lysenko did in genetics in the Soviet Union for a whole generation, but somewhere in the world it will proceed.

Recombinant DNA research is not a Pandora's box. There is no single instance or example to suggest that this research has a potential for harm any more than any other avenue of research in medical science today.

Pete, I invite you to have lunch with me and some of my colleagues the next time you are in the District to give us a chance to give you a more substantial background on this whole issue.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,

Arthur Kornberg

AK/i