

November 27, 1974

2- DEC 1974

Dr. Francis Crick  
MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology  
University Postgraduate Medical School  
Hills Road  
Cambridge CB2 2QH  
England

Dear Francis:

I have delayed replying to your letter in order to get clear perspective on this matter. A number of people have talked to me and I have received a broad spectrum of advice. Dorothy Hodgkin was here last weekend and her comments were most helpful.

First of all, I agree with you that the article in the New Scientist was most unfortunate and reprehensible. I also agree that it does not pay to speak to journalists, but unfortunately the first time the reporter called me, he already had a great deal of information given to him. Either he was given the contents of your's and David's letters as well as mine, or he was given extensive excerpts from them. In any case, he called me with a great deal of information in hand. He actually placed three calls to me over a two week period, and it was clear in his subsequent telephone calls that he had received new charges against us from Aaron. I was quite startled by the information he had in his first telephone call and it was for this reason that I immediately telephoned Max. Max tried to stop the publication, but unfortunately, the Editor of the New Scientist did not deal with Max in a straightforward fashion.

I was shocked at the release of material from what I thought were private letters. I was also startled to learn from Dorothy that the contents of your first letter to me are widely known in Oxford; she quoted the first sentence which seems to have caught on. I think that is a very dirty business.

Actually, we have been making no statements regarding matters of priority. For example, Sung-Hou had a discussion with John Smith at a meeting in Brookhaven at the end of May in which he described aspects of his interpretation of the map and its relation to chemical reactivity. When this was relayed to your colleagues, we learned that it created a considerable flurry of excitement. We do not know whether John described any relationships

in the structure which they were unaware of, nor do we know whether these comments accelerated the rate at which your colleagues decided to go ahead and write up their interpretation. In any case, this has been a matter of only private discussion between Sung-Hou and myself and we have made no public comments. However, I continue to hear reports of Aaron's public statements and most recently reports of John Robertus making public accusations against us in lectures that he has given.

I feel that I, together with my associates, have been grossly maligned and our reputations have been severely damaged. I feel especially badly about my younger colleagues who have still to establish themselves in science. Furthermore, I agree with you that this business has gone on far too long. However, as a number of friends have pointed out, the New Scientist article as it now stands accuses us of scientific theft, and if there were no answer to that article, it would in effect imply agreement with its contents.

Suggestions have come to me along several lines. One is that I should make a full and complete disclosure to the New Scientist stating in detail the nature of the charges and the exact events as they unfolded, including all the documentary material. I am not keen to do this.

Others have suggested, in line with your comments, that Aaron and I as well as our associates should agree to say nothing more in public and to write nothing, and that a credible third party should write something in the New Scientist which in effect states that the work of the two groups was done independently. This is not a question of priority, but rather is addressed to the claim of scientific plagiarism.

As things stand now, you have apologized for the misstatements in your first letter and I am happy to accept that. Likewise David Blow has withdrawn his letter from Science. However, news of these events are essentially private affairs, whereas the charges in the unfortunate New Scientist article are matters of public record. Furthermore, your reputation is such, unfortunately for us, that the wide dissemination of charges of plagiarism with an implicit backing from you and others at the MRC Lab automatically carries with it in the minds of most people the assumption of guilt on our part. It is for this reason that I feel that something more must be put on the public record, probably into the New Scientist in order to terminate the affair.

This view is shared by others who are familiar with the case, including several English scientists. Dorothy Hodgkin made the same comments to me last week. I telephoned Max when he was here a few weeks ago and we

Dr. Francis Crick

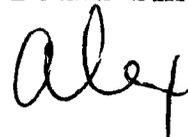
Page Three    November 27, 1974

spoke about placing something in the public record. At that time he had written to Struther Arnott but had not heard from him. I would appreciate hearing suggestions from you.

I would very much like to have all this behind me so that I can resume normal scientific life. We would, of course, very much like to exchange coordinates with your colleagues and discuss various features associated with the molecule.

*With best regards*

Yours sincerely,

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

Alexander Rich

AR:cdc