

PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY SERVICE

(Directed by the Medical Research Council for the Ministry of Health)



Central Enteric Reference Laboratory
~~CENTRAL PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY~~

COLINDALE AVENUE
LONDON, N.W.9

22nd January, 1953.

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Dear Professor Lederberg,

Thank you for your letter of January 13th. I am sorry that you think that one month would be an unsuitable time for me to spend in your laboratory.

I am in a rather difficult position. When I was informed that I was likely to be awarded a World Health Organization Fellowship this year, I knew that I could not stay for more than three months in the United States because my duties in this department made a longer absence impossible. I had therefore to decide how best to spend the time: whether to stay in one place and attempt a single solid piece of work, or to elect for a Travelling Fellowship and divide my time between several laboratories. After careful consideration I came to the conclusion that three months was too short a time to finish an organized research programme and decided on the second alternative.

Having come to this decision I planned a provisional itinerary and contacted a number of workers in the United States including yourself. The longest of my planned visits was to your laboratory because, of all the recent advances in bacteriology, the 'marriage' - if one may use the term - of bacteriophage with bacterial genetics seemed to approach most closely to the lines we have been pursuing here during the past few years, though, of course, transduction and phage-type transformation are not strictly comparable. I hoped to spend about one month in your department and to learn your techniques thoroughly at first hand but I had not considered the possibility of our collaborating in a specific programme because of the shortness of time.

However, I have already received replies from all the remaining workers I propose to visit agreeing to the times I suggested, and must therefore regard the itinerary as fixed. You say in your letter of January 13th that you could accommodate me for three or four days. Could you possibly extend this to one working week? If you could, perhaps I might be able to absorb intensively most of what I hoped to see, whilst taking up as little as possible of your time.

Professor J. Lederberg,
Department of Genetics,
University of Wisconsin,
Madison,
Wisconsin, U. S. A.

/Many

Many thank for your reprints, which arrived almost simultaneously with your letter. Your terminal comment in paragraph 3 on page 420 of 'Genetics and Hereditary Symbiosis' was a very shrewd prediction. I am more inclined to visualize the latent phage as directing the phenotypic modification of Vi-phage II without actively participating in it than to regard the process as one of phenotypic blending of phages following mixed infection of a bacterial cell, although the two views may be different ways of expressing the same thing. We believe here that all the adapted Vi phages including those that did not revert to phage A (Table 2, page 493 of the recent letter to Nature) are phenotypic modifications of Vi-phage II. If this view is true then one is faced, in the case of the unchanged group, with permanent phenotypic modifications, and I would very much like to know how these could be distinguished from true genotypic host-range mutants! It is obvious that more work is needed on the subject.

I found the comments in your letter most interesting but will not discuss them further here as I see that this letter has become rather long and my main object was to ask you for a slight extension of my brief visit to your laboratory.

Yours sincerely,



E. S. Anderson