

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
2101 CONSTITUTION AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20418

November 4, 1969

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
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Stanford, California 94305

Dear Josh:

This will acknowledge your letter of 22 October which I shall bring to the attention of the Council of the Academy. Meanwhile a few comments might be in order.

First, I cannot alleviate your concerns, as you hope in your last paragraph. We do not have an "effective program along these lines." It is true that in appointing the members of any given committee, we are aware of the general issues before that committee and the lines which might be drawn and utilize that understanding in composing a balanced committee. But this is done entirely in terms of the institutional affiliations of those so appointed. This may be a balance of disciplines in some instances, representatives of industry, the academic world, or government in others. But nowhere do we ask for disclosures of personal financial involvement. Conceivably, one day that might be used to our disadvantage, as you suggest, and for that reason I shall bring your letter to the Council. I am unaware that we ever have had an incident which would have precipitated the need for such disclosure.

Indeed, the only instance of which I am aware relates to myself. Before beginning my term as President of the Academy, I resigned from the Boards of Directors of three corporations (thereby suffering a loss of income of just under \$50,000 per year) and sold my modest stockholdings in various corporations, placing the proceeds into a single mutual Fund. (My guesses were better than the Fund's. The Fund has taken quite a beating in the downward turn of the market whereas the companies in which I had invested held their own very well!)

As far as I know, I was the first individual in this office to behave in this manner. Dr. Seitz was on the Board

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of Directors of several corporations and, as far as I know, that fact went unchallenged. However, my service on the Board of Directors of the Squibb-Beechnut Company seemed a particularly sensitive matter in view of the fact that the Academy was engaged in the large drug efficacy study at the time. They also marketed cyclamates ("Sweeta") and included sodium glutamate in baby food!

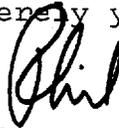
In view of your enclosure, I am not sure whether you know that it was an Academy committee that made the final determination that cyclamates had indeed proved to be carcinogenic in one strain of rat at a very high dose level. Our committee endorsed the findings which had been made at Abbott Laboratories and so informed the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. Surely as long as we behave in this fashion, regardless of the affiliation of private holdings of those who serve on the committees, we are not vulnerable, and it is the balanced nature of the committees which is our protection.

However, we should probably make at least one large step in the direction you suggest, i.e., ask the members of the Council of the Academy and the Governing Board of the National Research Council to make the kinds of disclosures normal to the Executive Branch of the Government. I shall so recommend at the next meeting of the Council.

In any case, I do thank you for writing and holding out the warning implicit in your letter. I am sure that the Council will give it the very serious consideration which it deserves.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,



Philip Handler
President