Dear Sirs:

In re: Joshua Lederberg American Scientist 59, March-April 1971. First let me praise a fine issue of American Scientist! I particularly liked Dr. McGeer's "The Chemistry of the Mind."

Why haven't you followed Dr. L's partisan pamphlet with a marshaling of facts from one or more concerned citizens of the USA. You seem not to be aware that a president of a 100,000 + member society characterizes Dr. L as "having a hang up on BW."

Dr. Lederberg unwittingly delivers the most telling argument in favor of BW munitions in the arsenal of one's favored country. BW strikes terror in the hearts of even sophisticated people. Scared foes are as immobilized as if they were animals staring into a laser beam; if they flee from a battlefield before many of them are infected then they will have lost in a humane war, won't they?

Who would (and has) advised our president to be prepared to surrender to an enemy without first trying to rout him with the threat of a man-made epidemic?

Dr. Lederberg suggests several impractical
BW munitions (black death, rabies, yellow fever) as a way of setting up a straw man of uncontrolled contagion. Yet he suggests that yellow fever without an insect vector would be useful in a one shot aerial dissemination. In winter mosquitoes are not around. In summer, humid South Asia, aerosols of yellow fever would have a short 1/2 life.

In December 1969 The Washington Post editorialized, "We need a disinterested person to advise us on BW."

Can't American Scientist give honorable employment to one or more scientists who through the years of Fort Detrick, have endeavoured to endow their country with a bonus for survival in an unfriendly world—by commissioning an informed article on BW?

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