



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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May 14, 1985

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Burke Zimmerman
United Nations Industrial
Development Organization
Vienna International Centre
P. O. Box 300
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Dear Burke:

Thank you for your communication relative to the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.

If we had cleared up the medium of communication we might have spared other discrepancies. I am routinely logged into a computer network: most conveniently Lederberg @ Rockefeller on Arpanet or Lederberg @ rockefeller.bitnet. I also have a mailbox "JLederberg"; on MCI mail but I do not consult my mailbox there unless I am alerted that there is a message waiting. I work through an autodialer on a Unix main frame and can therefore adjust to the baud rate or other protocols of whatever system you specify (usually 1200 baud, full duplex).

I was most interested to read the summary of the Los Banos Workshop, which could be thought of in some way as a prototype for the workshops to be sponsored by the Center. The great problem with that seminar, a problem which pervades all too much of the overall thinking in this field, is that it is technology-driven rather than responsive to the demands of the ultimate users. I would agree that a replication of that technology review within a year or so of the Los Banos Conference would probably not be too productive although it is, of course, what comes most readily to the people you have assembled for the advisory panel. Throughout the program at a scientific as well as policy level there is insufficient attention given to the need to develop a linkage between the exciting technologies of genetic manipulation and the physiology of the whole plant, its economic setting, and the world needs and world markets in agricultural products. So my principal recommendation is that you change the focus of the workshops to facilitate the linkage between the exponents of the new biotechnology and those who can offer a global perspective on the needs for agricultural production.

Dr. Burke Zimmerman

May 14, 1985

- 2 -

At the very outset of the Los Banos seminar there was reference to the concern for the "bypassing" of economically handicapped farmers such as small farmers and sharecroppers". In principle, the new technologies might be scale neutral or might even be weighted so as to favor the small holders in the developing countries. In practice this is extremely unlikely to happen unless we become far more educated to the requirements for which the new technologies can then be shaped.

As I believe we have discussed before, my deep concern is that we will develop biotechnological capabilities that will enable capital intensive agriculture, such as that of the United States, who produce crops with such efficiency that they crowd out everything else on the world market. (See "World Awash in Grain" in the current issue of Foreign Affairs). It is in no one's interest for the United States to feed the entire world, in view of the economic and political dependency this inculcates, in the absence of other exchangeable goods to be the basis for a healthy multilateral partnership in world trade.

I had a brief telegram from you mentioning the dates June 19 to 21. I have some intermittent engagements that would make these dates possible for me in New York City but not elsewhere. In any case, I would be more than delighted to offer the facilities of the Rockefeller University as a meeting place for the next meeting.

Burke, I'm sorry I have not been more communicative but my own schedule has been overriding during the last few months. I will try very hard in future to be responsive in a timely way and in a fashion that corresponds to my profound interest in the task for which you are showing such important leadership.

I do have one comment on the overall structure and direction of the Centers. I am personally skeptical about the validity of the Salk Institute model of non-resident faculty for the present program. A strong and interested panel of scientific advisors could accomplish the same task; if you can't elicit their interest under one corporate designation how would you get that under another? The Center laboratories have very important work to do and the limited resources available should be focussed on finding individuals prepared to make very substantial commitments to the enterprise.

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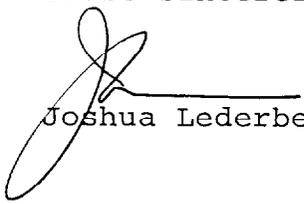
- 3 -

I'm also not so enthusiastic about the top management structure that the preparatory committee has now approved. This calls for one director for the whole international center and then a head for each of the two components. It is very difficult for me to see what the proper responsibilities would be for the super director and how to organize the lines of authority and responsibility so that this does not interfere with the proper management of the work at the two centers. My counterproposal is that there be the equivalent of a board of directors. The role of the "super director" should be that of the chairman of this board which could be a demanding but not full time position. The membership of the board should comprise participation primarily from the two centers in order to facilitate liaison between them. It should also include other scientific representation to provide linkage to the scientific efforts elsewhere. I realize however that the decision may be by now irrevocable for the "super director" management structure.

I do note Arthur Kornberg's nomination of Arturo Falaschi. I too have known Dr. Falaschi for perhaps 25 years and I agree with every approbation that Dr. Kornberg has recorded. He certainly is one of the finest people that could be imagined for a directorial role. Although I have indicated that the super director with two center directors reporting to him is not an optimal organizational structure, I could envisage that Dr. Falaschi would be a most effective person for a role of leadership at either level.

Perhaps I missed some relevant language but I would like to be sure that there are structures in place for close liaison with the International Rice Research Institute and other members of the International Agricultural Research System. I do not think that affiliation should be limited to centers who have specialized capabilities in "biotechnology" per se, unless that expression is broadened to indicate special expertise in the agricultural requirements of developing countries.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg