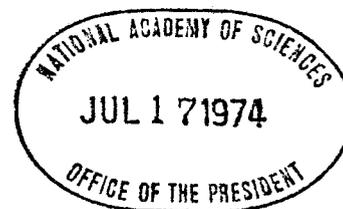




DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20014



JUL 17 1974

Philip Handler, M.D.
President, National Academy
of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20418

Dear Dr. Handler:

NIH has recently been apprised of the report on potential biohazards of recombinant DNA molecules, prepared by the committee of the Assembly of Life Sciences, National Research Council, chaired by Dr. Paul Berg.

We have been concerned with this issue for some time, and have been developing guidelines, soon to be published, for assuring containment of such agents while at the same time encouraging the remarkably able work of the molecular biologists, virologists, and geneticists who are pushing forward at this leading edge of science. A little over a year ago, our concern was limited to only a few agents of importance to man, such as the infectious adenovirus 2-SV40 hybrids. In the past year, the technology for the production of autonomously replicating DNA recombinants has burgeoned, and we will have to be concerned not only with possible pathogens of human beings, but also with agents of potential agricultural and industrial importance.

Because of NIH involvement in the support and conduct of research on DNA recombinants, we are prepared to establish and support the advisory committee recommended by the Berg committee, and also the international meeting of involved scientists which they believe is necessary. NIH staff have already been in communication with NAS personnel and with Drs. Berg and Baltimore, to set up the necessary task order for accomplishing these activities under the current NIH/NAS contract.

We regard the deliberations and recommendations of the Committee on Recombinant DNA Molecules as evidence of highly responsible thinking and action on the part of these scientists. It is apparent that such

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individuals are not only out to do "science for science's sake," but are prepared to postpone further work until they are sure that there will be no risk to the public as a result of their investigations.

Sincerely,


Robert S. Stone, M.D.
Director

Copy: Dr. Baltimore
Dr. Berg /
Dr. Vosburg