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September 20, 1968

Victor A. McKusick, M. D.
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John Hopkins University
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Baltimore, Md. 21205

Dear Dr. McKusick:

Thank you for sending us the reply from Time. I am sending it and your letter on to Bill Voss who is away from office, but will shortly return. We appreciate your writing to the magazine and feel that a message from you has a heuristic value not readily lost on the editorial mind.

As to L'Affair Randall, I enclose a copy of my recent letter to Tom Hyde of The Jackson Laboratory, in which I touched on this matter. I have not written to Judy and though I ran into her at the Transplantation Congress last week, the time, place, and bystanders were not conducive to bringing up the subject.

The concensus at this office appears, in general, to agree with your view. I should like to say that Dr. Lewontin's talk was the kind easy to misinterpret or overinterpret. He was good humored, yes, but seemed dead-serious in suggesting that certain kind of research should take precedence over other kinds. He mentioned this, among other things, during the short press meeting prior to the lecture. The time available was too short for the press people to really grasp the gist of his arguments.

It hurts to think that Judy Randall was perhaps best equipped to get what he was driving at. I suspect that she feared his stress on the need to understand the origin and significance of human biochemical polymorphisms would be largely incomprehensible to the readers of Washington Star. So she started with Lewontin but ended mostly with her editorializing. The story emerged as a kind of chimera, with Lewontin's head and Randall's tail, joined in the meddle by that gratuitous reference to nutrition.

In any case, I think the point of her story was not the same as the point of his lecture. It may be interesting to hear Dr. Lewontin's public comments on the article, though probably no useful purpose would be served by such an undertaking. The impact of a newspaper story is usually ephemeral, unless it is repeated.

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THE MARCH OF DIMES

Dr. Victor McKusick

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I am naturally concerned about the effect of the story both for the public and for the scientists, including the faculty members of the Short Course. If you have further ideas, Bill Voss and I will be happy to receive them.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph Mori
Medical Editor

JM:gig
Enc.

cc: Mr. Voss
Mrs. Dorothy Davis