

Hotchkiss ↓

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

*pro bono humani generis*

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Dear Rollin:

I'm really glad you wrote that letter of Feb 15 -- it only just got here. I was not aware of any "block", and certainly have never felt in any way "offended", and so am especially glad to have it all out on the table.

I did think at the time that the cleanest evidence for "genes" would be to use markers close to those already familiar in mendelizing systems, hence my initial preference for auxotrophic markers modelled on Neurospora. When you and Julie did mannitol and streptomycin I was greatly relieved, and of course linkage put the cap on it. But I'm well aware I'm only describing what was most persuasive to me. And I could only sympathize that pneumococcus was so heterotrophic that you had to turn in other directions.

And I haven't made myself clear about the importance of the chemical identification. It was certainly very important! But I was sure that, given the authentication of why it was a vital thing to know, it could not long evade the skills of chemical analysis, and it would be equally exciting to have snared the gene, no matter what it turned out to be. So I would turn my own attention, and this is also where my own skills were, to the biological interpretation of the transfer phenomena, -- the more confidently to be able to generalize from the pneumococcus capsule to the whole universe of genetics.

In the end, the pneumococcus transformation did not need E. coli conjugation; while everything deep about E. coli did need the insight of DNA! I've remarked on this in the enclosed.

I can't remember anything in the least bit "condescending", and I have always been too fond and too admiring of you for that to be imaginable on my part.

It was indeed a great occasion.

All the best,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

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