FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

IN REPLYING, ADDRESS THE

USPHS Tbc. Research Lab.
411 East 69th Street
New York 21, N. Y.

Nov. 11, 1952

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Joshua,

As you may gather from this letter, Norton Zinder proved to be a successful salesman yesterday. I have long delayed answering your last letter since I couldn't decide whether the advantages of familiarizing myself with transduction experiments would outweigh the disadvantages of having to take time off from other matters. Norton explained to me that all you were really asking was that I determine a few growth requirements; and on rereading your letter I see that I should have understood this. I'll be glad to do such tests and shall write Plough as soon as I've had a chance to read his paper. Incidentally, I think it would be entirely proper and not difficult for you to approach Plough on this matter yourself. I am hardly gifted with an excess of tact, and my success in my recent business with him was due simply to accepting a piece of advice from Szilard who happened to be around at the time. When Plough angrily denied my statement that his results must have been in error I planned to write him a letter offering the alternatives of retesting the material and publishing a retraction or having me publish a note on my failure to confirm his results. Szilard pointed out that such an ultimatum would only increase his resistance and if he was an honest man all that was necessary was to give him enough time for cooling off. As you see Szilard was right and I learned a good deal.

I agree almost entirely with your remarks on matters of terminology and I am pleased that you are willing to accept "meiotroph". I particularly agree that prototroph may end up as a rather unnecessary word since the arbitrary position occupied by a given wild type on a scale or grid of nutritional requirements is of little genetic interest. But I don't find myself, in a first response, very enthusiastic about the notion of dropping all the words based on "troph" in favor of words based on synthesis. The nutritional requirement is the operational fact with which we work, and I think there may even be some advantage in keeping the terminology close to the operations - and certainly not enough disadvantage to justify casting off a well-established terminology.

Best regards to Esther

Sincerely,

Bernie