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THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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January 20, 1958

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Medical Genetics
The University of Wisconsin
School of Medicine
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Joshua:

Thank you very much for your invitation to the symposium, which I am pleased to accept. Unfortunately, the animal virus genetic field is not moving forward very rapidly and I shall have very little that is new to contribute. We have some results with Newcastle Disease virus, which fails to show recombination down to a fairly low level, but with influenza I have been mainly concerned with getting the virus to behave well in a plaque-forming system and I am determined to do this before trying any more genetic experiments. I think it will work out but it is a very delicate system. 1)

I was very much surprised to find that you had familiarized yourself with what I consider to be a very messy situation with respect to influenza virus recombination. I agree with you completely as to the probable explanation of the difference between our results and those of Sir Mac on the Melbourne WS experiments. I should be much interested in hearing any further details you may have about discussing phenotypic mixing with Sir Mac. I have always felt that he was unconvinced that there was such a phenomenon but he never discussed it directly with me. 2)

I am enclosing the reprints which you requested.

I also want to take this opportunity to say how much I enjoyed your recent Harvey lecture and I am looking forward to seeing you in Madison in April.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

George K. Hirst

GKH:fmz
encls:

1: Splendid
2: I'll be glad to talk to you about it in April. Burnet may (or may not) be there too. He's leaving in about a month for a semester at Vanderbilt. I think he is gradually straightening out his interpretation of phenomixing, though every now and then there is some allusion to recombination or heterozygosis in a context that surprises me. But he has many references to anomalous neutralization, e.g., in the 1953 CSH and in papers in the Australiam J.... (Principles of An. Virol.) In his book (p. 418) he gratuitously adds "and, in all probability, carry two or more sets of genetic determinants". He just thinks so: I've tried to argue the point.

J.L.

Hirst, G. K.