

November 20, 1972

Dr. Bernard D. Davis
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25 Shattuck Street
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Dear Bernie,

I have your letter of November 7th, and I have talked with Preston Cutler about their response to you.

I would still very much enjoy seeing you here next year and will persist in taking on the burden of finding you office space. I appreciate your understanding of the possible difficulties and constraints, but I am certain that we can meet your minimum requirements and I will do my best to get you accommodations that would go beyond that standard.

As to the title of "Visiting Professor" this has traditionally been applied to professors who have been invited to teach, usually as replacements for existing faculty, and whose salary is paid in part at least from Stanford University funds. However, this may not be a completely inflexible policy, and if you will send me two copies of a routine CV and bibliography I will find out. Regardless of title there will be no problem in getting you the commensurate privileges.

The one thing I would not look forward to is your connecting the department in any special way with the book you are planning to write. I am personally quite sympathetic with your goals but I would prefer not to have to put them to the test of formal acquiescence by the rest of the department and by others at the school which might be entailed by any implication of offering "credentials" for the book. Appointments as visiting professor are scrutinized by an all university advisory board, and I think they might reasonably ask embroiling questions if it were asserted that your appointment was for the purpose of writing a popular book. We are more than happy to offer you hospitality but your credentials rest on your general reputation and your long held position at Harvard.

I hope you will have had a chance to see the Gardner Lindzey manuscript or will have an opportunity to do so soon and to hear your reaction to its content.

There is another problem ~~of~~ more than philosophical interest that I meant to bring up in our all too brief discussion, and that is the alleged evolution of a number of infectious diseases (syphilis, scarlet fever, diphtheria, plague?). It is often asserted that these have varied, historically, in virulence in a way that may reflect genetic changes in the pathogens as well as the environmental milieu and therapeutic responses. I can well believe

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this but I think the issue deserves to be looked at more critically than has been done before, even by Burnet~~f~~. As the issue might have some bearing on whether we may expect a global pandemic of great severity from some now relatively innocuous infection it may have some as well as antiquarian and scientific importance.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr