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1051 Juneau Rd.
Ypsilanti, Mich.
December 1, 1976

City Council Members
City Council
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Sirs:

Having read the article "New Strains of Life--or Death" in the New York Times magazine, dated 8/22/76, I applaud your decision to halt temporarily the construction of the laboratory for specialized genetics research. Alexander Capron, University of Pa. Law School, was quoted on pg. 68 of that article as saying "as crucial as your research seems to the achievements of progress, you should be prepared for the eventuality that the public may not agree". Author Lick F. Cavellieri, member of the Sloan Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and professor of Biochemistry at Cornell University Graduate School of Medical Sciences, had three main objections to recombinant research being carried out at this time. They were concerned regarding inadequate safeguards for:

1. Physical containment.
2. Biological containment.
3. Human error.

Physical containment has been successfully used before in varying research areas and relies on negative pressure inside the sealed containment center, all air being circulated and filtered within the center. Workers entering and leaving the research area must shower. However, recent developments within the last few weeks concerning Geoffrey Platt at the Porton Down Microbiological Research Station shows the fallibility of this system.

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Biological containment is a relatively new concept and involves using enfeebled organisms, so if by chance some did escape, they theoretically would not be able to survive in the outside environment. It is stated on page 67, "that the National Institutes of Health Rules states that an experiment using recombatant E. coli is safe only if no more than one out of 100 million of the bacteria is able to survive outside of the laboratory. (It should be noted that 100 million is a small number as laboratory bacteria go)."2

As far as I am personally concerned, one out of 100 million is still too high for the potential havoc that could be caused by a single bacteria.

Human error has to be considered above all else since it is the hardest to control. I refer to the accident in England concerning the so-called "green monkeys disease". For proof that although accidents do occur, something of this magnitude must not be allowed to happen, whatever the immediate benefits to mankind.

In closing I would like to commend the Council for standing against the proposal when they did. I feel something needs to be done at the International level but until that happens it is up to the grass roots, i.e. State and City government to stop this until such time when totally safe and adequate safe guards are found.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Roeske

Rick Roeske

FOOTNOTES

The New York Times magazine, section 6, page 8, August 22, 1976, The New York Times Company.

1. pp.68

2. pp.67

REFERENCES

The references are from the Eastern Michigan University Library in Ypsilanti, Michigan under Deoxyribonucelic Acid.

1. The Ann Arbor News, section I page 3, February 10, 1976, Knight Publishing Company.

2. The Ann Arbor News, section II page 15, May 21, 1976 Knight Publishing Company.

3. Asilomar Conference on Recombinant DNA molecules. Science, vol. 188 June 6, 1975, page 991-994.

1. S- 567

Comm. from Rick Roeske favoring the City Council's action relative to the construction of a laboratory for genetic research by Harvard University.

In City Council,
December 13, 1976

Placed on File