



HARVARD UNIVERSITY
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THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES

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16 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE, MASS. CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

January 12, 1977

Mayor Velluci and Members of the City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

Though I admire many features of the Cambridge Experimentation Review Board's report and agree with most of its recommendations, I do not agree that work with recombinant DNA should go forward at this time in the City of Cambridge.

My chief reasons are:

1. The N.I.H.'s decision to open up this new and powerful area of research, one that everyone agrees entails a variety of hazards, was arrived at without developing a mechanism of consultation with the people who stand to bear the risks or with their elected representatives. The debate that preceded the decision and the development of the N.I.H. guidelines was narrowly focussed (on questions of "how" rather than "whether" to go ahead) and was limited mainly to scientists, most of whom had a professional interest in seeing the work done.

I believe that at the very least there should be open Congressional hearings not on the question how to do the work, but on whether we should be moving in this direction at this time. We know from past experience that when a technology becomes available, it is used. The technology of genetic manipulation has the potential to affect the lives of many people, who need to be given the opportunity to know what is involved and to say whether they want it to happen. What is more, because many precautions are needed, the work will be expensive (as you know, about \$ 800,000 just for the facility in this building, for example) and will therefore divert money from other needs that perhaps should have a higher priority.

Human genetic manipulation (genetic engineering) by its very nature focusses on changing people rather than the conditions of their lives. This is dangerous and undemocratic when these are the very people who have least power to defend themselves, e.g. the sick and the poor.

2. I believe that the Cambridge City Council and the Experimentation Review Board made a mistake by accepting the N.I.H.'s definition of risks into the P-1 to P-4 categories. The work that is going on right now at the P-1 and P-2 levels under minimal safeguards poses as great or greater hazards to the environment than do many P-3 or P-4 experiments, nor can anyone be sure that the distinction is valid even for risks to humans. If the C.E.R.B. believes that ~~EK~~-2 organisms need to be used at the P-3 level -- and I agree that they should (if and when

it is decided that the work should be done at all) -- the same restriction should apply to P-1 and P-2 level experiments.

Though continuing the present moratorium in Cambridge -- indeed extending it to all work with recombinant DNA at all levels of containment -- will not protect the people or the environment from the hazards of work done elsewhere, Cambridge is in the limelight. Therefore what happens here will have a significant impact at the national and even international levels.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ruth Hubbard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ruth" and last name "Hubbard" clearly distinguishable.

Ruth Hubbard
Professor of Biology

Comm. from Professor Ruth Hubbard of Harvard
Univ. expressing her beliefs as to why DNA
research should not begin in Cambridge at
this time.

In City Council,
January 17, 1977

1/17/77

- Placed on File -