

October 18, 1951.

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Dear Tracy:

You will not, I am sure, be surprised to hear from me in response to John Behnke's note of the 16th.

About a year ago, when you gave some very good advice about what should be included in a reprint book, you asked whether I would come in with you in writing ~~Microbiology~~ of Microorganisms. After some indecision, I told you that I had better not. The main reason would be the work obliged, but another factor may be equally important: I would much rather have the opportunity of reading, and of assigning in a course, a book you had written than one diluted by my own comment. I still feel this way.

But Behnke intimated that you might abandon the project, at least in its comprehensive form. I told him that I hoped you would not abandon it, and that he could add my own urgings to his own. I can sympathize with your wish to spread the burdens, even if I don't approve of it. However, if the sine qua non of your writing is a collaborator, I would reverse my former inclination. The ~~limit~~ that I would set for my contribution would be the minimum participation that will still allow you to complete the job. Presumably this might mean something along the lines of filling in your outline with relevant details from studies with bacteria and viruses. It would perhaps also mean some critical discussion of points of emphasis where we did not see eye to eye. It emphatically could not mean that other specialists would be invited to add other discussions.

If this letter accurately expresses your state of mind, we should get together for a conference: Esther and I would not mind driving down for a visit anytime the road conditions remain predictable. But I would, of course, much rather hear that you were willing, if reluctant, to do the job yourself.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg.