

October 25, 1947

Dear Burr:

In your last letter you expressed the wish that I should some day sit down and write you all the dirt that has accumulated here. I did not expect to do this so soon, but a sudden pile of it appeared on my own doorstep and I think I ought to let you know.

You are sufficiently familiar with the beginnings so I do not need to go into that. As you know, I have been getting an increasing amount of opposition in the Medical School and a decreasing amount of support from the Hill. At the beginning of this semester, something occurred which precipitated a crisis and it evolved essentially around the three students who had spent the summer with Van Niel to fulfill requirements stipulated by Bronfenbrenner as necessary before they could register as Ph. D. candidates.

Martin decided to clarify the issue with respect to the three students and managed to get a meeting in Dean Tolman's office, to which everyone was invited. The purpose of this was to see what could be done to give degrees in general microbiology as distinguished from medical bacteriology. Now, while a general agreement was not reached, due to the opposition of Corey, Dean Moor, and Bronfenbrenner (who had strongly supported it in private), a compromise with respect to these three students was arrived at which consisted of setting up a committee which would have the power to pass on their qualifications via a preliminary examination and to make up the program to be followed for the completion of the degree. It was agreed at this meeting that Gest would do his research with Martin and that Juni and Sussman would do their theses under me. Everybody agreed to this and the subcommittee appointed by Tolman met and performed its functions of setting up the programs to be followed by the students.

Two days later Dr. Bronfenbrenner, who had been a member of the committee and subcommittee, called up Dean Tolman and said that he would not allow Juni and Sussman to do their work in his department. Then he further went to Dean Stearn and told him that

he was not recommending my re-appointment at the end of the present academic year. Since I was very busy doing all examinations for the medical students, he was afraid to upset me, so he says, and waited for four days before telling me of these events.

So you see, I am now looking for a job. I am making arrangements to send the students elsewhere at the end of this semester and the probability is that they will be able to complete their work in microbiology with A. A. Barker at Berkeley. I am quite hopeless about the situation here and do not think that anybody of any weight will come rushing to my defense. The issue, of course, was a very simple one. I had violated the unwritten rule of the Medical School which stated that nobody below the head of a department could direct theses work for the Ph. D. It was this, and the fact that insofar as the meeting in Dean Tolman's office was concerned, this aspect of the matter never even came up for discussion, for you know that as far as the graduate school is concerned, anybody of the graduate faculty can direct theses. Of course, a lot of irrelevant brouhaha has been dragged into the picture by Bronfenbrenner to bolster his case and his conscience. That is the situation as of today.

With respect to my prospects, I frankly don't have any which are really definite enough so that I can be sure of them by the end of this academic year. The tragic thing, of course, is the interruption of the research program, which is really going very nicely now and it was for these reasons that I had turned down some of the offers that I had earlier in the year. Harry Eagle, Director of the National Cancer Institute, has offered virtually to underwrite a research laboratory where I would want to put it. I am going to try to find out more specifically how far he will go. In the meantime, any advice that you can give me will be very welcome indeed.

I must confess I was particularly stupid in not seeing the issue more clearly from the beginning, and also something which has become crystal clear in the last few days; that the major part of the opposition which has developed in the Medical School has come from my good, dear friend, Dr. Bronfenbrenner, who apparently bitterly resented the extent of the activities that were going on in his department which were completely beyond his control or comprehension. In a way, of course, it is difficult to blame him completely for his attitude and had I realized it early enough, there was much that I could have done to counteract it and keep ~~himself~~ it from growing in his mind to such an extent that it completely clouded his ability to evaluate the situation. I apparently have

much to learn about handling people; perhaps I am completely incapable of doing it for I seem to have a genius for getting the right people on the wrong side. In any case, as far as I am concerned, I do not want to handle anything as large as what I have been trying to do in the last two years, and if I can get a set-up of modest dimensions with reasonable colleagues, I will grab it.

Sincerely,