

14 September 1949

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Dear Dr. Boyd,

Thanks for sending your remarks about Wiener and Snyder's proposals for naming human genes. A little while ago Snyder wrote to me, asking me to form an English committee to discuss such proposals, and I shall ask Drs. Race, Lathrop and Ford to discuss all proposals with me with a view to sending joint comments.

I do not suppose that agreement will be at all easy. For one thing, some people like more regulation and some like less; I am rather of the latter type myself. For another, the whole question of genetic nomenclature and notation has not been so thoroughly established in plants and animals as to afford strong immediate guidance for usage in human genetics. I separate nomenclature and notation because the human race will continue to speak many different languages and therefore to use translations in nomenclature, while I think we could achieve international unification in notation. Nomenclature seems also the

fitting means of supplying a mnemonic as to the effect or function of genic diversity at the locus considered, a purpose from which I think notation might be relieved.

In the meanwhile I shall keep your comments for discussion with the English group when Wiener and Snyder's proposals come our way.

About the Rhesus factor, I expect you may have noticed the evidence, which we find rather convincing on this side, that three loci, rather than one, are involved. It would not be surprising if, as research continues, crossing-over is demonstrated, so that it is of some real importance to maintain now a terminology sufficiently flexible rather than one which will be overthrown whenever close linkage is shown not to be absolute. I had in fact proposed a system of literal designations for three pairs of allelomorphic antigens and the corresponding antibodies, and had been using these concurrently and not antagonistically with the designations developed from time to time by Wiener on your side, and by Taylor and Race on yours, for the quasi-allelomorphic antigen-complexes which have been found.