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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

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January 22, 1979

*Correct*

Lionel Tiger, Ph.D.  
Director of Research  
Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation  
17 West 9th Street  
New York, New York 10011

Dear Professor Tiger:

Along with Ernst Wynder I have been thinking for some time about how the paleo-ontological approach and evidence might be useful in professional education about problems of modern lifestyle and premature disease. Thus, when I was invited last fall to give the Bishop Lecture (this coming March) for the American College of Cardiology, I planned to become at least an interested amateur, sufficient to bring the message to my clinical and academic colleagues in cardiology. I was delighted to hear of your interest in joining our April conference on "Optimal Blood Lipid Levels for Populations" and to summarize this very subject in regard to diet.

My thinking is not yet very clear on the matter. I would very much enjoy an exchange of ideas with you. I am in particular need of prime sources of information that you might be able to recommend. Finally I am in need of attractive pictorial displays.

I am wondering if you might be kind enough to let me have a schedule as to when you are in New York. I would hope to plan a trip to spend some time with you to discuss these matters prior to my lecture, during preparation of your presentation for April 12th at the American Health Foundation.

So far, I have read the ideas of Professor Lee and his studies among the !Kung in the Kalahari and have been extracting notes from Howell's Time-Life series on Early Man and from the young Leakey's popular writings. Obviously, a major problem is to know how much the gatherer-hunter observations in modern times relate to observations from early man and how much this living pattern was involved, over the eons, in the development of human metabolism and physiology. How much in man's present metabolic make-up can we infer in regard to adaptations during the evolutionary process? Can we make a series of "teleological" arguments based on such evidence as the exquisite sodium retaining power of the kidney and its ready potassium losing tendency with respect to man's early adaptation to a low salt-high potassium intake? Can we draw a similar analogy with respect to the gastrointestinal tract and the liver in the regulation of blood lipid levels? Can we relate findings of muscular development to evidence or supposition concerning physical activity - that man is "meant to be engaged in" through the long adaptive process? Is there a source for discussion of man's habitual endurance and peak activities

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other than the obvious extrapolations from a "natural range" around watering holes? What can we say about the longevity of early man and does the fact that he did not live long influence our attempts now to extrapolate to questions of lifestyle and premature disease which represents in fact advanced old age for early man?

I am sure that you have thought of many other questions more appropriate to our mutual presentations and would enjoy very much the opportunity to discuss these things with you.

Finally, are there museums or libraries you could recommend where I might go for illustrative material to compare early man and modern man in respect to eating and physical activity patterns?

I am enclosing a public health view of the issues of hyperlipidemia and socio-cultural forces which may amuse you. It is obviously not profound sociology but it's a view rarely considered by clinical and academic colleagues.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.  
Professor and Director  
Professor of Medicine

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Enclosure