

Corres - Ward



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

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Richard H. Ward, Ph.D.
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Dear Richard:

Many thanks for hearing from you and for your awfully generous comments in the June 22 letter. I suppose you found out with your postal strike that much of your correspondence really "isn't necessary". It's the sort of revelation we have here about the real necessity of travel when Northwest Airlines goes on strike.

I too will miss the information, stimulation and fellowship of the Study Section. One never feels that he comes anywhere near doing the job he wants to do for that magnificent institution.

Ann Schluderberg has really made it a smoothly functioning organization, with a reasonable workload, and she is clearly to be commended and supported. She did not respond, however, to my parting suggestion which you may or may not want to carry the torch for. I think we spend much energy on the proposals without ever knowing the decisions. I think we should be provided with that information systematically. It's equivalent to an emergency room physician making a diagnosis and never getting the hospital discharge or pathology reports. I believe we have a right to the pink sheet or the face page of the pink sheets, at least on the cases which we review, if not on all study section cases. This is not too complicated a line of communications for the Institute. It is an important part of the reimbursement to see the final priority score and to have the NIH decision on funding and to read the summary of our deliberations.

Rest assured that you are on the reprint list of the Laboratory, which is in a period of change. The balance is shifting toward health behavioral and community demonstration research or large-scale epidemiological "experiments", and away from more basic laboratory and small-group research in physiology, nutrition and epidemiology. But I imagine we will continue to evolve. There are now deliberations for us to merge with a truly academic division, Epidemiology.

Done?
yes

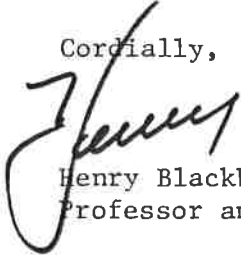
With respect to my current interests in diet and activity and evolution, which can only leniently be characterized as "amateur", I can imagine nothing more exciting than a workshop on nutritional and genetic epidemiology. I am so totally unprepared in genetics and such a rank amateur in anthropology and sociology that I run great risks in synthesis. Nevertheless, so few people attempt synthesis that I think it should be tried. I welcome the comments and criticisms of experts who can set me straight.

In this regard, I would not encourage you to read the enclosed tome. But I would welcome your response to the nature-nurture part of the introduction. The tautological idea of mass diseases being related to mass lifestyle on top of a genetic legacy from evolution is probably not testable, even if it should be a reasonable concept.

It would be marvelous in your workshop to get some of the people who attempt to "put it all together". Do you regard J.V. Neel as such a one? He has just sent me an interesting unpublished article on the "thrifty gene concept revisited".

I am grateful for your note written shortly after the last study section meeting, and will be very pleased if we can stay in touch.

Cordially,



Henry Blackburn
Professor and Director

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