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I have your letter of August 20 concerning a biological verification regime being prepared for submission at the next review conference of the BW Convention of 1972.

There have been some 15 years of negotiations for a Chemical Weapons Convention, of which only the last two or three years have witnessed some real progress. The most difficult points to resolve have been verification of non-production, including systematic and challenge inspection regimes. The enforcement agency (technical secretariat) will be large, inevitably bureaucratic, and expensive.

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"Compulsory" inspection for non-production of biological weapons would compound the measures agreed for a CWC, and the difficulties involved. Instead of increasing confidence between states it could well prove the contrary because of loopholes allowing suspicions to arise in those wishing to exploit such suspicions.

Many years ago Pugwash actually organized trial inspections in two large, commercial biological laboratories in France and Switzerland (and, I believe, in a Scandinavian country) in preparation for the BW Convention of 1972, but gave up the effort as unfeasible and, as it proved, unnecessary for the treaty. I still believe it is neither wise nor practicable.

For the above reasons I do not support the idea of a formal verification regime. I would rather depend upon extension of data requests that have already been worked out in previous BW review conferences, and emphasizing the concept of "openness"-- reciprocal visits to laboratories by scientists, open publication of all work, etc.--as advocated in my previous response to the request from Dr. Weinberg.

Sincerely yours,

Martin M. Kaplan

cc M. Meselson and J.P. Robinson