

Comm on 2000

Columbia University in the City of New York

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Hamilton Hall

New York, N. Y. 10027

August 16, 1965

Dear Professor Meselson:

The American Academy has forwarded to me a copy of your letter to Paul Freund, regarding the Commission on the Year 2000, since I shall be in charge of its work. I have asked Mr. Voss the executive officer of the Academy to forward to you the roster of those who have accepted and some preliminary materials that have been assembled.

Frankly, our venture is a speculative one. We have invited individuals from various fields--Professor Dobzhansky of the Rockefeller Institute, William Baker from Bell Labs, Emanuel Piore of I.B.M., Wassily Leontieff of Harvard, Charles Haar of the Harvard Law School--in order to tap a wide range of interests and competences. Our general feeling is that our society does not do enough "forward looking" to anticipate problems which may arise in the future, and to design some institutions or plans to deal with these. Our present scrambling in the fields of race, education, housing, urban planning, science policy, air and water pollution, are all indicators of this fact.

The Commission, clearly, will not seek to undertake a comprehensive forecast of the future. Nor will the Commission itself necessarily do some of the detailed work involved. What we are seeking to do is to get some agreement on kinds of problems which may arise and then see if we can single out a few for more intensive work, either by members of the Commissions or persons proposed by Commission members.

Our present plan of work

Columbia University in the City of New York

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Hamilton Hall
New York, N. Y. 10027

-2-

is to meet for three week-ends of discussion, during the academic year, at the House of the American Academy in Brookline. There will also be a smaller "working party" which will meet between sessions to do more intensive work on the agendas and the presentation of materials.

We are still "open" as to what will come forth. It may be a special issue of Daedalus; it may be that plus a general statement to be signed by the Commission, or some intensive monographs, etc. These are matters for the Commission to settle during the first meeting.

We were eager for your presence on the Commission because of your work in molecular biology. I know, regretfully, little biology, but in these past months I have been engaged, under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, in a study of the revision of the curriculum of Columbia College; and in this pursuit I did some reading in biology and came across many appreciations of your work. We feel that so many of the problems of the future will be shaped in considerable measure by the new findings in molecular biology that the presence of an informed person like yourself is for us an important factor in the work of the Commission.

sincerely

Daniel Bell
Daniel Bell