



(DS 13/5)

DISARMAMENT DEPARTMENT  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

24 October, 1969

*Dear Meselson,*

Timms has shown me the proceedings of your Conference on Chemical and Biological Warfare, and I have read these with the greatest interest, particularly the sections on the military requirements for lethal chemicals and incapacitating chemicals, which are very relevant to certain avenues I am now exploring - sorry I can't be more explicit than this.

As regards the suggested Unilateral Declaration, I have never been a unilateralist myself. (My father, who was a Quaker in later life, was rather proud of the fact that when five boys threw him into the Thames about the turn of the century, he succeeded in pulling them all in with him.) I quite agree that if you can't get a Convention, there's something to be said for relying on moral example, but surely this is only a second best, and you do better if you can get the Russians and everyone else to renounce BW absolutely at the same time as you do. The participants in your Conference were, I think, almost exclusively concerned with the implications of CBW for the United States, and this is quite understandable. But at any rate as far as BW is concerned, I just can't see the United States and the Soviet Union using them against each other - they've got far more effective ways of committing suicide. I'm much more interested in closing the option for the non-nuclears, who may develop an unhealthy interest in BW as the "poor man's bomb" if the Non-Proliferation Treaty proves effective. But the non-nuclears aren't going to sign a BW Convention unless the super-powers are parties to it, so we need your backing for our Convention, not just your moral example.

Now if you're going to have a Convention, I think it will have to look pretty like our draft. This brings me to Wiggins' "fatal defect". We don't claim that we are providing a verification system. We made it quite clear in our original working-paper that we didn't think this possible, and that given the choice between an unverified ban and no ban at all we thought the former preferable. At the same time we have suggested a

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Mr. Matthew Meselson,  
Harvard University,  
The Biological Laboratories,  
16 Divinity Avenue,  
Cambridge,  
Massachusetts.

procedure for investigating complaints of infringement, and this has gone down rather well with the non-aligned in Geneva. There are two points I would make about it.

The first is that we quite recognize that investigation of complaints of production might be quite ineffective. Even if the Security Council agreed that an investigation should be carried out and nobody vetoed it, the evidence could well have been destroyed by the time the investigating body turned up. Nevertheless, it will be a lot easier to investigate a charge that specific people are doing some specific thing at some specific place (e.g. the Grafschaft business last December) than to verify that nobody is doing anything illegal anywhere, which (pace ACDA) is obviously out of the question.

The second is that investigations of complaints of actual use would not be subject to the Security Council veto and might quite well be fairly conclusive, given the pattern of incidence of the disease. But if countries know that their use of BW will at once be followed by an impartial scientific investigation which may well establish the facts, and that all the parties to the Convention will then be pledged to come to the assistance of the party attacked, they will be at any rate less likely to use them; and if they recognize the dangers of using BW, why should they run the additional risk (even if it is only a small one) of being caught producing the agents in the first place?

In short, I maintain that, though proper verification is out of the question, the procedures we have suggested would act as a valuable deterrent, and that our Convention as a whole should be supported by all right-minded people who are genuinely anxious to minimise the possibility of BW ever being used anywhere. I should like to think that you and Wiggins are right-minded people, and enclose a copy of this letter for you to send on to him if you think - - - fit!

Do come and see me again next time you are in London.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*R. C. Hope-Jones.*

(R. C. Hope-Jones)