

Cambridge City Council : Public hearing, June 23, 1976

Re DNA

f. 459

order of events, press release



6/21/76



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS

ALFRED E. VELLUCCI  
MAYOR

PRESS RELEASE

On Wednesday night at 7:00 P.M., the Cambridge City Council and the people of Cambridge will come to grips with a critical problem.

It appears likely that Harvard University is intent on building a containment laboratory that will eventually be used for experimentation in recombinant genetics.

I will keep an open mind at this public hearing, but I am not afraid to say that as of now, I am against this project.

When you combine genes in a new way, you have no sure way of knowing what will come out of the experiment. If the new organism is infectious, and if it escapes from the lab, then we would have a problem that may well be beyond our control. This is at the heart of my reference to Frankenstein. We may make a creation that slips beyond control and turns around to destroy the creator. An extremely small microorganism can be just as destructive as a full scale monster.

The scientists can make no hard and fast guarantees; how could they when they are dealing with the unknown? I represent the people of Cambridge and I have a solemn responsibility to protect the public health and welfare.

I am not against the pursuit of knowledge. As a practical man I realize that recombinant DNA work will continue elsewhere if not here. I only ask that this work be done in a maximum security laboratory in an isolated area of the United States, not in one of the nations most densely populated cities.

Public officials as well as the general public must be encouraged to participate in the debate that surrounds this work. Science is at a major threshold; it now is beginning to explore ways to alter the course of evolution. Natural selection may be replaced by the infusion of human design. We all stand to be effected by the outcome of this bold venture into the brave new world.

The questions involved are truly profound, and now they are with us. With little warning or fanfare, the future has arrived. Certainly the public has a right to participate in decisions which affect its destiny.



[attached to  
press release]



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS

ALFRED E. VELLUCCI  
MAYOR

ORDER OF EVENTS FOR PUBLIC HEARING OF JUNE 23, 1976

The sole purpose of this hearing is for the City Council and the people of Cambridge to hear testimony concerning the possible construction of a special containment laboratory at Harvard College which is intended to eventually be used for experimentation in genetic recombination.

No decision will be made at tonight's meeting; this is a public hearing, the purpose of which is solely to gather information.

The Council will decide at a later date, and at a regular Council meeting, what action if any it wishes to pursue in this matter.

It is in the interest of all concerned if we recognize and adhere to the following agenda:

1. Presentation by the University's delegation. (30 minutes maximum.)
2. Questions from members of the Council only.
3. Questions of FACT only from members of the Council and from the public upon recognition by the Chair. (Neither arguments nor opinions are in order at this time; this period is to settle questions of fact only.)
4. Arguments, by the public, upon recognition by the Chair, in FAVOR of the University's position. (10 minutes maximum for each speaker.)
5. Arguments, by the public, upon recognition by the Chair, in OPPOSITION to the University's position. (10 minutes maximum for each speaker.)

It is helpful if all speakers are as frank, succinct, and brief as possible in their remarks, given the ten minute time limit.

The subject matter before the Council tonight is important to all of us; no one person or group has a monopoly on the interests at stake. Whether this research takes place here or elsewhere, whether it produces good or evil, all of us stand to be affected by the outcome. As such, the debate must take place in the public forum, with you, the public, taking a major role.

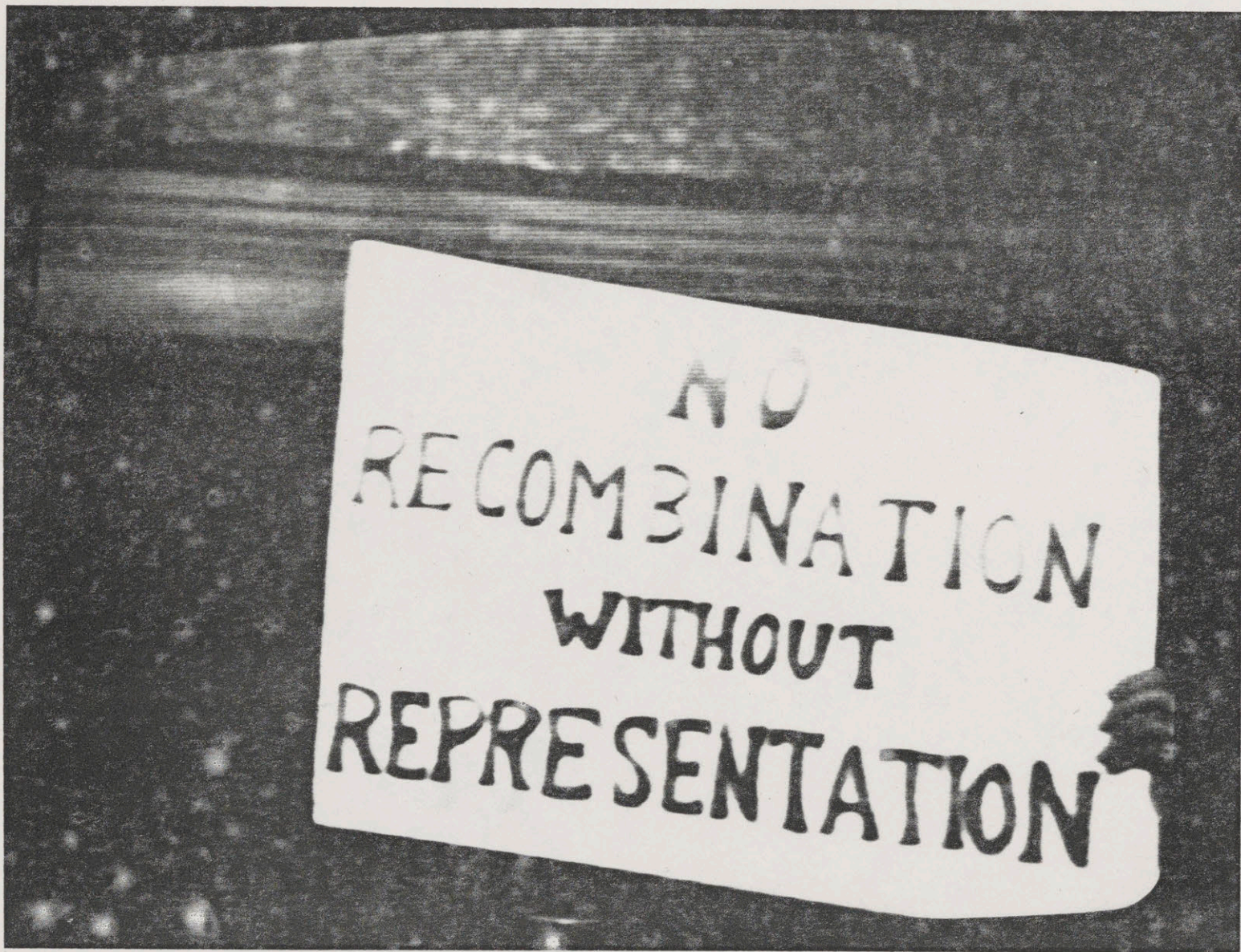
I thank you for your interest and cooperation.

  
ALFRED E. VELLUCCI

Mayor

ARCHIVAL BOND





NO  
RECOMBINATION  
WITHOUT  
REPRESENTATION



MIT-HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

PHOTO ACCESSION FORM

ARCHIVES

MIT-HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

SOURCE Recombinant DNA Controversy Collection

FILE \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESSION # \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTO # \_\_\_\_\_

FOLDER TITLE Cambridge City Council,  
Public Hearing, June 23, 1976

FOLDER # \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS Print and negative of photograph  
taken from a videotape of the hearing.

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

Subject of the photograph is a placard  
being held up in the gallery, saying

"NO RECOMBINATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION".

DATE 9/21/78

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME Roland Madany

NAME \_\_\_\_\_





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I thank you for your interest and cooperation.

*Alfred E. Vellucci*

ALFRED E. VELLUCCI  
Mayor



Statement by R. Hubbs  
6/23/76

I would like to say a few words about why I am opposed to this containment facility being built in the City of Cambridge and at the Biological Laboratories, *at Harvard,*

The work on what is called recombinant DNA that is proposed to go on involves taking in that laboratory ~~laboratory~~ genes from higher organisms and putting them into bacteria, usually E. coli, a bug that lives in our gut, in the guts of all our domestic animals, of birds, insects, in the soil, in water -- you name it, it's there. In other words, it lives in us and all around us. Ordinarily it and we live together happily and don't give each other any trouble. Occasionally something goes wrong, and E. coli causes disease.

A transfer of genes from higher to lower organisms occurs rarely, if ever, in nature. We therefore have no way of evaluating the safety of ~~these~~ <sup>this</sup> new kinds of ~~experiments~~ <sup>technology that is in fact manufacturing new organisms</sup> sometimes But we do know that genes/act differently when they are ~~made~~ in different environments. We therefore cannot predict how the genes of E. coli will act when foreign genes are put into it or how the foreign genes are going to act in E. coli. <sup>But we do know that once these new organisms are made, they will reproduce and spread and they cannot be recalled.</sup>  
Now, it is proposed that these experiments be done in "containment"

facilities, but everyone agrees that such facilities cannot in fact

"contain" E. coli because it will inevitably be carried out by the people









# City of Cambridge

1.  
IN CITY COUNCIL  
June 14, 1976

Mayor Vellucci

**WHEREAS:**

Harvard University is seriously considering a program of experimentation in genetic recombination, and

**WHEREAS:**

Simply stated, this means that they will be creating new microorganisms that are nothing less than new forms of life, and

**WHEREAS:**

It is conceivable that these new life forms could create a serious threat to the public health if they got out of the lab area, lead to disease, and were not subject to known techniques of control, and

**WHEREAS:**

Some extremely capable biologists feel that this experimentation poses a more serious threat than the dangers from radiation, and

**WHEREAS:**

The building where the experiments will take place might be ant and roach infested, thus increasing the likelihood that these microorganisms might escape and lead to infestation, and

**WHEREAS:**

Cambridge residents would be the first to be affected if this danger materialized, therefore be it

**ORDERED:**

That the City Manager immediately and without delay call for a public hearing on this matter to be held within two weeks, and be it further

**ORDERED:**

That President Bok, Dean Rosovsky, informed biologists, the Director of the Cambridge Hospital, and any interested citizens be invited so that this matter can be aired before the public.





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