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January 23, 1978

The Honorable Adlai Stevenson
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510.

Dear Senator Stevenson:

I have read with great interest your recent statements to the effect that in the U.S. our scientific research and development are declining and that we are beginning to suffer economically as a direct result. I wish to commend your stand on this subject and wish further that it was shared by more of your colleagues in the Senate and the House.

This particular subject has long been of direct interest to me because I have been involved in the development of inventions that evolved from University research. Much of this research has been sponsored by one or more agency of the federal government.

As a general rule, the sponsoring agency has taken the position that any inventions arising from work it sponsors shall belong to the federal government. I don't quarrel with the motives of the people who set such policies; however, I do wish to point out the practical effect of such policies. The most significant and usual result is that the invention is completely sterilized so that it is of no earthly good to anyone, except foreign companies who get a free ride. In times past Presidents Kennedy and Nixon recognized the folly of this practice and have stated as a government policy that greater rights in these inventions should remain with the inventors or his University. The implementation of these presidential statements has been practically non-existent.

Assuming that it is in the best interest of the country to see that new scientific ideas are introduced into the economy, I believe that much could be gained if the federal government took a more realistic view aimed toward leaving such rights with the inventor or his University. The interests of the inventor should be carefully considered because it is he that has to report his inventions in the first instance. Any inventor that has had an invention taken away from him by government fiat is going to think twice about reporting another one.

The government and the economy as a whole desperately need the contributions of all of its scientists. I believe that the cooperation of these people can be obtained by encouraging their participation rather than stifling their efforts.

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I have tried to explain some of these points in a letter addressed to Senator Gaylord Nelson since he seems to be in favor of still more restrictive governmental policy. A copy of my letter to Senator Nelson is enclosed.

If I can be of any assistance to you in your program, I am at your service.

Very truly yours,

RES:AH
encl

Ray E. Snyder