March 9, 1948

Dr. Joy Barnes Cross  
Department of Preventive Medicine  
The University of Texas Medical Branch  
Galveston, Texas

Dear Dr. Cross:

I have your letter of March 3 in which you asked me to indicate some of the reasons that might have been responsible for the rejection of your recent request for a grant for the study of toxoplasma. I can only speak for myself, rather than for the Research Grants Division of the U. S. Public Health Service, and I would like to say that your proposed research plan involved work which essentially had already been carried out by others. Your proposal to devise methods of growing toxoplasma in tissue cultures in vitro and on the chick embryo may be an example. You will find published within a very short time the results of work in which excellent propagation of toxoplasma in the chick embryo has been obtained. As to methods of growing toxoplasma in tissue culture, if you read my various reports, you will find that 13 years ago I had no difficulty in growing toxoplasma in a very simple medium consisting of minced chick embryo suspended in Tyrode's solution. As to your proposal to devise diagnostic procedures and to carry out chemo-therapeutic studies, your plan of approach was either vague, or was already known to be ineffective. Others have already tested the compounds you mentioned — incidentally, with negative results. With regard to diagnostic procedures, you did not make it clear just what it was you proposed to do. It also was not clear what special studies along cytological or morpho—
physiological lines you planned to carry out, or what new information not already available might be expected to have been derived from these studies.

Your report published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases was an interesting extension of information already at hand. Unfortunately, there is evidence of a certain carelessness in your reading of the literature, as when you say, "some investigators have accepted encephalitosoon as being identical with toxoplasma," and quote me among others as being responsible for that. Where you ever got such an idea in reading anything that I have ever written I cannot understand. Perhaps it will clarify the situation for you if I tell you that Wolf's original report describing the bodies which he found in a human case as encephalitosoon led me to suggest that they were not encephalitosoon, and that they were toxoplasma instead. I have at no time maintained that encephalitosoon and toxoplasma were identical, and Wolf has indeed retracted his original identification of those bodies as encephalitosoon. Furthermore, again when you say that the relationship between avian and mammalian toxoplasma is not yet determined, quoting me, in that respect you need only refer to the very publication which you quoted to find that that has now been clarified.

I can only suggest that perhaps the most important point in a request for a research grant is to make clear precisely what one wants to do, how it will be done, and what information not now available, either positive or negative, may be expected to be derived from it. It is essential that the proposed work not be merely a repetition of what has already been done by others, and it is also essential that the applications show evidence that the applicant is thoroughly
familiar with what has already been published in the field, I will grant you that the progress made in the past year in cultivation of toxoplasma in the chick embryo could not have been known to you and also that you had no way of knowing that the chemo-therapeutic studies which you proposed had already been carried out. It may be assumed, therefore, that if another program of study is submitted by you it will receive the most careful consideration.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Albert B. Sabin, M.D.