

DEPARTMENT OF
ZOOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE ANATOMY,
UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, OXFORD.

April 21st. 1931.

My dear Fisher,

I have just seen John Baker. He had read a recent paper of mine and was under the impression that I had attributed an idea of Elton's to you. I discussed the matter with him and find that he had not understood my point. He had confused what are (to me) two very different things.

He supposed that I had credited you with the idea that a gene producing a non-adaptive character might spread through a population if this is rapidly increasing when the mutation occurs, and that it might establish itself when stabilization had taken place - so producing a non-adaptive change. Now I personally do not believe this, and from what I know of your writings I don't fancy you do either! Elton has often spoken of it to me - long before he published it in his book - and I have always said that I did not agree, so I knew very well that the idea was his.

What I suggested was that when a .

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population is increasing, a gene has a greater chance of spreading, even if slightly disadvantageous. It may thus find itself in new internal environments, in a way it could not do if the population were stable, and with some of these it might react in ^a new, and possibly beneficial, way. Selection would then take place in favour of this effect, producing an adaptive, not a non-adaptive, change. I mentioned you in the matter, as I conceived you to be the first who clearly stressed the fact that we have no reason to believe that a given gene has always produced the same effects, since its results may be changed by selection of the gene-complex - a fact in itself long known, but not generally applied.

As I find that Baker has mentioned this matter to you, I thought I would let you have a line to clear it up.

Yours very sincerely,

L. B. Ford
