

Ottawa 4, Ontario,  
15th December, 1952.

Dr. D. O. Hebb,  
Department of Psychology,  
McGill University,  
Donner Building,  
Montreal, P.Q.

Dear Don:

Following our conversation this morning and after talking to Tom Cook further on the matter I have come to the conclusion that under the present circumstances you were right in saying that it would merely cause questions which we wish to avoid if we were at this stage formally to reclassify your work for the Board under Contract No. 39. However, this will mean that it will be understood that it is not work to which we wish to draw attention by active steps on your or our part. In other words we shall not say anything more about it than we have to say, and where we do have to say anything we will avoid any reference to the original purpose of the work.

This means, as I see it, that you should not give any papers about the project unless these papers are classified and are given to a screened audience (as was the case at the DRB Symposium). Presumably, therefore, you would not use the material as a basis for a paper before the Eastern Psychological Association or any other similar gathering since it is apparent that the subject-matter is exactly the kind which the press would seize upon and report in a most colourful fashion.

I think that the above represents the sense of our agreement. If you feel otherwise, will you please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

N. W. Morton,  
Chief of Division (D).

(N. W. Morton),  
Chief of Division (D).

NWM/CMD

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Dr. D.O. Hebb

16 November, 1953.

I quite agree with you also about the propriety of not keeping scientific research secret unless really necessary, but I do feel that we have a strong case for doing so in this one instance. And, if you recall, we did make the arrangement for this work to be done under a contract rather than a grant because we realized that it was a project requested of you under special circumstances.

The one thing that might cause me to change my mind would be what you have previously suggested, namely, a need to publish the information that you have gathered. But there has not yet emerged here a clearly defined user requirement that would involve publication, and I would like to see us establish it first.

I regret that I can't duplicate the skilful illustration at the bottom of your letter, but please consider that I am praying to you too.

Yours sincerely,

N. W. Morton,  
Chief of Division (D).

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Chief of Division (D).



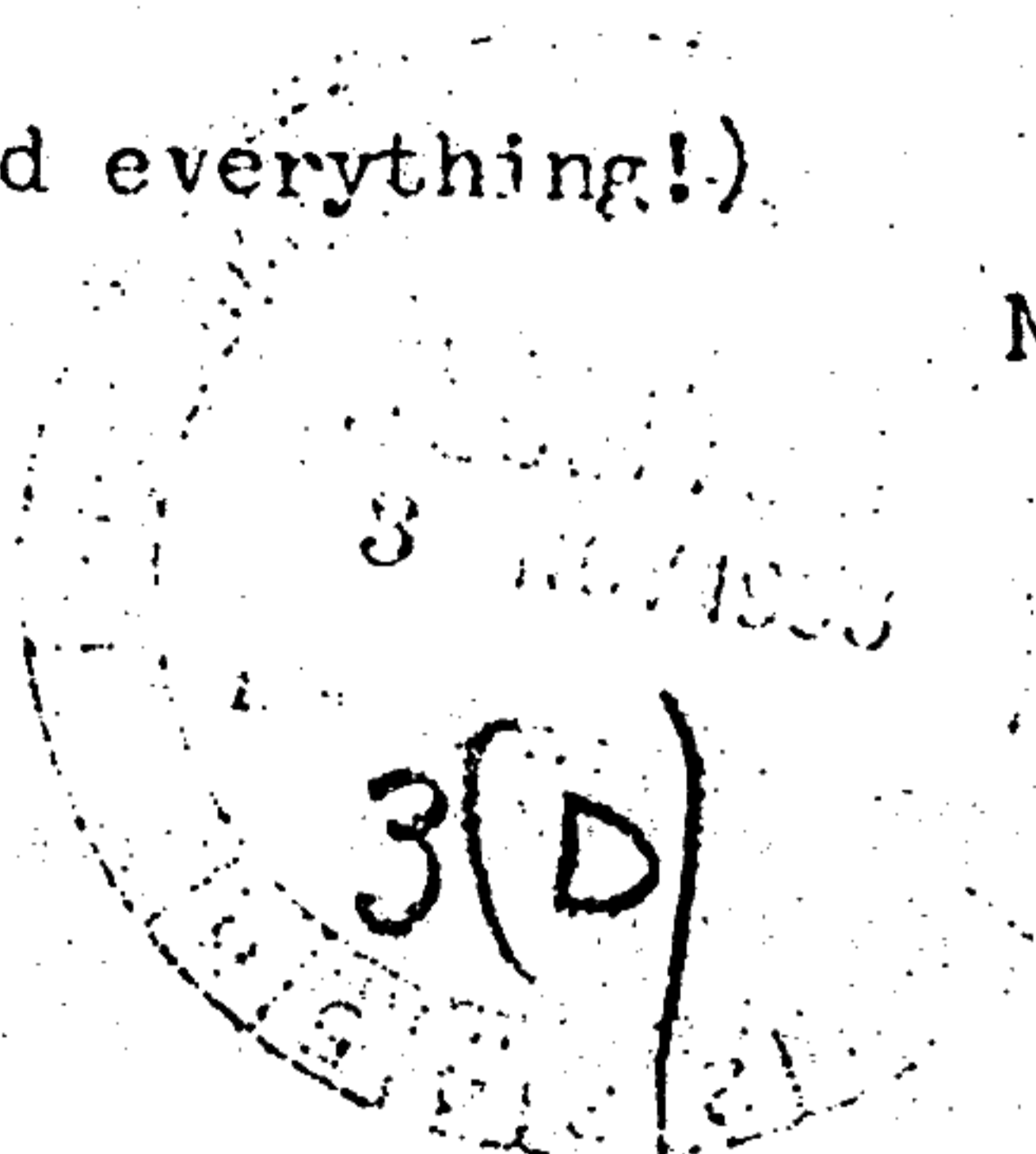
McGILL UNIVERSITY  
MONTREAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Look, two envelopes and everything!)

November 2, 1953.

Dr. N. W. Morton,  
Chief, Section D,  
Defence Research Board,  
Ottawa, Ontario.



Dear Whit:

This is a formal request for permission to discuss the intellectual changes, and the experimental manipulation of attitude, obtained in project X-38, at Cameron's regional research conference in psychiatry at the Allan Memorial, on December 5. I shall not be speaking from a written-out text, and so cannot submit one to you; but I will undertake to tread carefully.

O.K? or must I leave out the attitude-change part?

Thinking over what you said when we discussed complete declassification of the project the other day, I've been puzzled by one thing: except for bad public relations, (if information about the project were presented in a bad light so that a propaganda weapon against us might (conceivably) be possible), what other reason is there for keeping the stuff classified? I.e., why not declassify now, and take positive steps to get it presented in the right light--instead of taking the risk that, in view of all the experimental subjects' knowledge of the project, the whole thing will get presented publicly in the wrong light?

I would feel, moreover, much safer if it were; I see no reason why this should not be done; I think it immoral to keep scientific results secret unless really necessary; and it would be useful to me, for the furtherance of our work and for getting financed, to be able to talk freely about it. I have worked hard for you people, with no other pay than getting these experimental results--muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn.

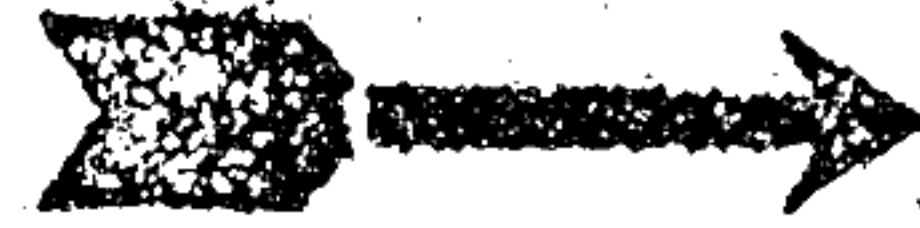


Humbly yours,

*Jan*

D. C. Hebb  
Department of Psychology

P.A.



DRBS 2\_1-44-38(CD(D))

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ottawa 4, Ontario,  
16 November, 1953.

Dr. D. O. Hebb,  
Department of Psychology,  
McGill University,  
Montreal, P.Q.

Dear Don:

I am sorry that your letter of November 2 with regard to the proposed discussion at Dr. Cameron's regional research conference on psychiatry has not been answered sooner.

While I regret it very much if I appear to be unreasonable, I still feel that as a matter of policy it would not be desirable for us to give any publicity whatever to that part of the contract which relates to the use of isolation as a condition under which to attempt to influence subjects' attitudes.

What I am afraid of is that our motives will be distorted if the idea were picked up in the press and reported elsewhere. I can see this happening very easily for it is just the sort of thing that would make a good news story, and if there were no reporters at this conference there will be at some other one at which it was discussed. The next thing we knew it would be in the category of "germ warfare".

I agree with you that if we do nothing there is always some chance that the information might leak out anyway, but I would like to point out that we have, on your recommendation, already taken steps to counter this by agreeing earlier that you could speak positively about other aspects of the work which might serve to drain off the attention of the curious. Having done this, which I think was a good step, it seems to me that we would now be quite illogical to expose that which we have attempted by the previous step to protect. Actually, there is so much that you can say now about the project, that I would think that there was really very little likelihood that the phase of it still protected would leak out.

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