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Bldg. 206, White Oak
Silver Spring 19, Maryland

5 May 1948

Dr. Sam Legvold
Department of Physics
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa

Dear Sam:

I have discussed your proposition with several people, including Dr. Roy Weller and Dr. J. Bion Philipson. Weller you know -- he is currently engaged in building a house of concrete (and cinder) blocks; besides, he is very interested in building methods, so much so, in fact, that he is laying the blocks himself and producing a wonderful wall. His place is not far from mine and I see him frequently.

Philipson has returned to government employment with the successor to FHA. He is generally well-informed on the whole problem. Carr or Fox would remember him and give you more details on his background. I trust the information I have collected is accurate and useful -- it indicates what one is up against in invention. I wish I had time to check the patent files on this subject; however, this is a time-consuming job and I could not and consequently have had to go on hearsay.

In the first place, it seems clear that a number of interlocking blocks and blocks with guiding projections have been invented. Also, the block with a sloping face to match drop siding is old in the art. What I have not been able to directly ascertain is whether a block combining these features is new. On the other hand, it is almost certain that such a combination would not constitute invention but engineering. Mr. Hicks might not agree but most patent attorneys and the records of patents allowed would confirm that combinations are only patentable when the interaction is novel and not predictable according

to the common knowledge of the art. It seems to me this would be hard to establish in the current case. A design patent might be allowed, but the protection resulting from this would be very limited.

The Housing and Home Finance Agency has a technical group headed by Mr. Leonard Hager. You might write out the details of your idea and address it to him. If you will mention that you were referred to them by Dr. J. Bion Philipson, I am certain you would get an accurate judgment as to the value of your ideas. I hesitate to continue this exploration myself because I find I am not completely sure of all details.

Here's hoping this or other business brings you to Washington. My highest regards to your family.

Very sincerely yours,

John V. Atanasoff

JVA:chk

Dictated by Dr. Atanasoff but signed in his absence.