

## LETTERS

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### Hungarian National Museum

A letter just received, from Zoltán Kaszáb, director of the zoological department of the Hungarian National Museum, details damage to the museum in October and November 1956 [*Science* 125, 342 (22 Feb. 1957)].

The building of the National Museum in Museum Circle burned 24 Oct., with complete destruction of the mineralogical and paleontological collections and library and the zoological exhibits, including the African dioramas. On 5 Nov. the zoological department building, on Baross-strasse, was partly destroyed, with complete loss of collections and libraries of reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds, lower invertebrates, and mollusks. In the insects the Orthopteroidea, Neuropteroidae, and Diptera collections and library were lost. The collections not destroyed were damaged in firefighting. The collection of G. Horvath was thoroughly soaked and about 30-percent destroyed or damaged. The Coleoptera collection survived, but several hundred boxes were soaked, and unworked Hungarian material suffered.

There were no casualties among the zoological staff, and the members have been engaged in transferring and safeguarding the surviving collections and libraries, which have been moved to another building.

Kaszáb asks for help in rebuilding the destroyed collections and libraries.

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### Medicine and Society

Do sufficient numbers of the medical profession feel an adequate measure of social responsibility? A. Szent-Györgyi's deeply penetrating article on "Science, ethics, and politics" [*Science* 125, 225 (8 Feb. 1957)] has stirred such questions in my mind and disturbed my thoughts.

The values and benefits of medical science are easily taken for granted. If, however, as medical men we take our social role too much for granted, we may all the more easily be utilized by those whose designs reach further. It is certainly risky to have blind spots in our view; but it could be fatal to be blind to the possibility of such blind spots.

We know that human beings can hardly be understood apart from their environment; as a physician in general practice, at any rate, I believe this to be so. But the mere recognition of socioeconomic origins for much of the conflict which disturbs patients is far from a responsible attempt at preventive medicine.

We frighten people about cancer and heart disease. Is it comparable morality to make no protest when dangerous automobile designing, inhuman economic pressures, and morbidly competitive social standards all bring grief to our

patients? Insurance companies have enough money at stake in these matters today; surely there is adequate medical and social understanding to justify a cautious but realistic approach and study. Instead of hopeful, fundamental methods we are employing stop-gap solutions and introducing them with a fanfare—for example, tranquilizers, larger mental hospitals, more facilities for more geriatric patients.

The "ethics" of politics and government can be so variable as to be indistinguishable from the dictates of expediency; they are comparable to the assidu-



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