

## 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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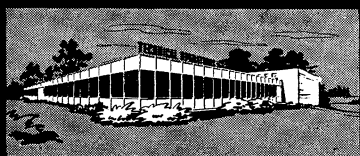
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ous treatment of a disease by symptomatic measures alone. In an unenlightened age this was the best that good men could do. Medical ethics today, however, demand serious consideration of all the underlying pathological processes at work, and the best possible treatment directed thereto.

It is my expectation that, if we do not learn to look around us and see what we do in the context of the whole, then we, as physicians or as any other self-defined group, will be taken at our own valuation and used by others as technicians.

I would be interested to know what others think.

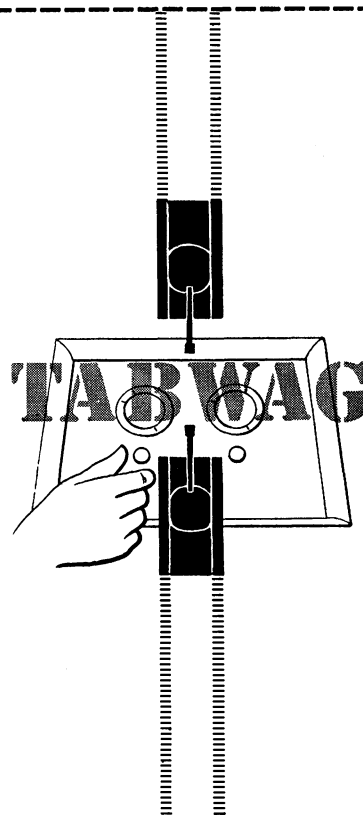
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### Research in Science Teaching

A recent editorial, "The fetish of experiment" [*Science* 125, 177 (1 Feb. 1957)] appears to call for the return of science to the Middle Ages. To state, "There are other educational changes that lend themselves to experimental study, but many of the current efforts to improve the teaching of science and mathematics do not," is admitting a dogma and an unscientific attitude as well as an unwillingness to bring in highly qualified research people in the teaching of science. I agree that many of the problems of teaching do not lend themselves to experimental procedures as employed by the physical scientist. However, there are many excellent instruments and methods of evaluation that could determine how effective a given program or approach to teaching science and mathematics can be. Sound techniques in evaluation are adequate for many kinds of teaching problems and may be as effective as experimental procedures which frequently do lend themselves to "fetish of experiment."

Very few scientific organizations and scientists are aware of the existence of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, which publishes detailed abstracts of doctoral studies in the teaching of science in its official journal, *Science Education*. Not many scientists who are much concerned with the improvement of teaching science have taken the time to examine related studies that have appeared in this journal. The National Science Foundation supports science teachers in summer institutes when they continue their studies in the sciences. No provisions are made at the same time for these teachers of science to be brought up to date in the research work pertaining to the improvement of science instruction. An effective science teacher should be kept up to date, both in the current research in science and in the research of the teaching of science.

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