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WORLD LEADER IN COENZYME-A

"Fire Department" of Science

The editorial "A proper accounting" [*Science* 139, 7 (1963)] caused me to recall that an earlier issue of *Science* [125, 949 (1957)] contained a letter on the same subject.

Is not the fact that, in the past 6 years, nothing has been done to correct this important deficiency in the communication system of U.S. science proof that something far deeper than this symptom is wrong with the organization of the "system"? Could it be that U.S. science really has no organization? Certainly neither the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Foundation, nor any other agency has the authority to study, much less make decisions about, such matters. Isn't this proof that we lack the needed organizational machinery with which to solve important problems related to science?

In the absence of such machinery, many of the most fundamental decisions affecting the future development of U.S. science and the lives and work of individual scientists are being made by a process which might be called "studied neglect." The status of U.S. scientists in many vital matters can be compared to that of the owner of a new home in an isolated, somewhat unknown neighborhood, who discovers that his house is burning and that the fire is too big for him to handle alone. Not yet having a telephone he has no direct way to call the fire department. And anyway, he can't be sure there is a fire department. And if there is one, he doesn't know for sure if it is responsible for fires in "his" neighborhood. In his alarm he's likely to raise a window and scream "fire." But under those circumstances his scream will, I fear, probably be no more effectual than your editorial, or the 1957 letter, will be.

If this is an apt analogy it points to the need for establishing an official "fire department" of science—and for letting the public know what its functions are, how to communicate with it, how it can be used to solve problems such as the editorial points to, and so on. But that thought leads to the question: How would we do it?

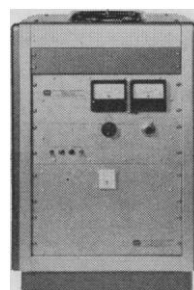
Because of the fundamental issues of public and national policy involved, it seems clear that to answer the question in a way that would be influential would require a national debate. Probably the appropriate body to initiate such a debate is Congress. It could



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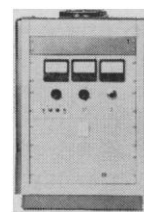
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easily be initiated by offering prizes for answers to some such question as this: What is the best way to reform our government machinery in order to improve the relationship of science to the federal government, and, by improving that relationship, to improve the total relationship of science to our whole society?

JOSEPH W. STILL

419 Cambridge Avenue,
Claremont, California

Messier 1

"The story of the Crab Nebula" [N. U. Mayall, *Science* **137**, 91 (1962)] caused me to examine my old radio maps [G. Reber, *Proc. I.R.E. (Inst. Radio Engrs.)* **1948**, 1215 (1948)]. At 480 megacycles per second the most prominent feature of the winter Milky Way corresponds with the position of M1. Apparently I encountered this object without being aware of its nature. The observations were made during 1946-47.

GROTE REBER

"Dennistoun,"
Bothwell, Tasmania, Australia

Science for the Humanist

The editorial "Science and the humanities" [*Science* **138**, 1367 (1962)], commenting on James H. Mathewson's excellent article on educating the non-scientist in the nature of science [*ibid.* **138**, 1375 (1962)], exhibited a parochialism and arrogance unworthy of the pages of *Science*. The editorial says that science is difficult; therefore our educational process should be geared to the teaching of science. After that, the graduate can pick up the humanities at his leisure because "after the rigors of training in science, the subject content of the humanities seems hardly more difficult than a good novel."

Are the myriad individual and social problems of a typical blighted area of a big American city (poverty, dependence, mental health, delinquency and crime) really so easy of solution? How about the economic, social, and cultural problems of developing areas? Racial conflict? War? Ethics? Can rigorously trained scientists, after a bout of easy novel-like reading, undertake to tell us how to meet these problems?

To paraphrase the comment by Ken-

whatever you expect in

lab furniture . . . you get in

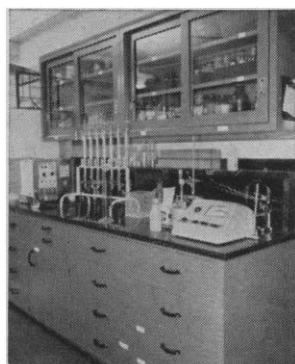
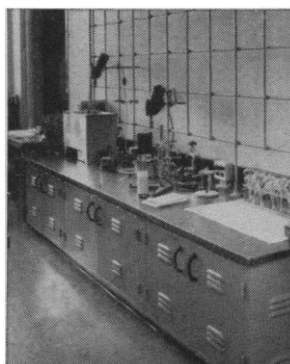
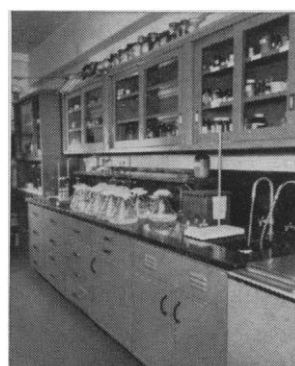
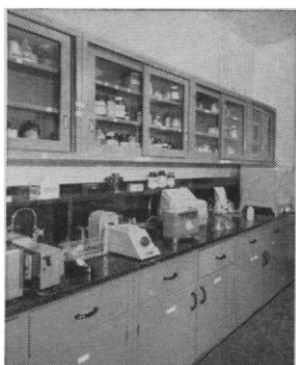
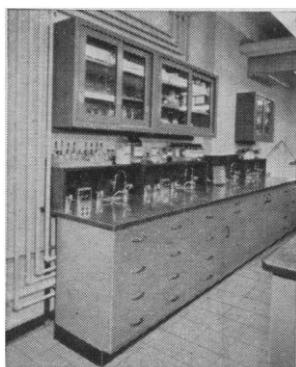
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