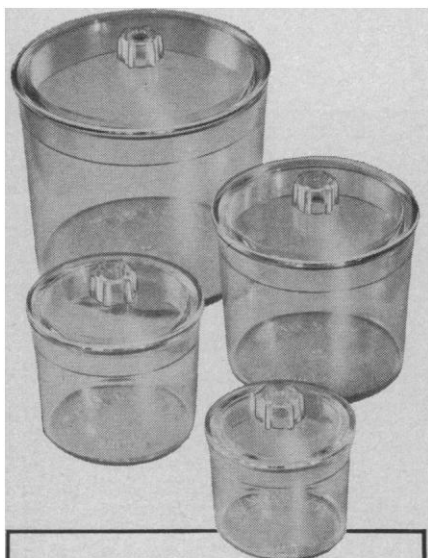


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Nobel Chairs Are Privileged

I have observed an important difference between a Nobel laureate and other scientists. Although the number (one) of observations is small, my finding is remarkable.

At the overcrowded 1966 Cold Spring Harbor Phage Meeting, a small number of comfortable chairs close to the speaker's platform were highly desirable. Before leaving such a chair, a scientist found it necessary to leave a notebook, clipboard, swim trunks, or other personal possession in order to insure a finite chance of reclaiming his seat. At the time of observation, the Nobel laureate left nothing in his chair, but upon his late return from a coffee break, his chair was still available.

Determination of causality in this observation can only improve human welfare. It may be that scientists who can lay claim to a good seat without leaving personal belongings are destined to become Nobel prize winners. If this be so, a great improvement in our ability to predict scientific greatness would be available. Demonstration of the other possible relationship, that possession of a Nobel prize insures a good seat, would make this great honor even more coveted and spur scientists to greater endeavor.

To follow up this observation and determine causality, I intend to seek funding from Breakthrough Institute (1 Jan. 1965; 11 Mar. 1966).

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Humility and Constitutional Rights

After reading Rutman's letter on the Russian peace questionnaire (16 Sept.), I feel compelled to express my view in defense of our government.

Rutman is absolutely correct that our Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and government must not meddle. He then states, "I see no way in which the international nature of the public interchange alters this restriction." Well, do all governments in the world provide freedom of speech to their scientists? If not, then we are not working with the same ground rule and additional guidelines might not be out of the question. Remember Lysenko? Remember Nazi

persecution of Jewish scientists? Notice the Chinese chemists who synthesized bovine insulin claiming that this achievement was inspired by the correct thinking of Chairman Mao Tse-tung? Are these events not offensive? Are these not even more opposed to "the international character of science and the normal attitude of scientists?" Where are the teach-ins and the demonstrations? Where are the complaints about principle and arrogance?

I think it might be a good idea if we ask ourselves the following questions: Are we lacking in humility and too sure of our judgment? Is it wrong for scientists to listen to diplomats on foreign affairs and to economists on tariff? We are trained in a scientific discipline; does that mean, *ipso facto*, that we scientists have the only truth and the right answers to all problems?

If we want genuine and permanent "growth of respect and amity between peoples," we might have to appreciate the problem of the other side, including, in this case, our own State Department.

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Calendar Distortions in 1642

As a supplement to Crew's interesting note (Letters, 16 Sept.) relative to Newton's death, it might be noted that there is also a particularly notable confusion relative to his birth date. The death of Galileo came on the evening of 8 January 1642, and Newton was born on 25 December 1642. It has, therefore, been frequently, and incorrectly, written that Newton was born the year that Galileo died. However, the death of Galileo is given in terms of the new calendar and the birth of Newton according to the old calendar. According to our current calendar, Newton was born on 5 January 1643.

For those who will be involved in commemorations of Newton's birth or death, there will be considerable exasperation resulting from the calendar change. The confusion is augmented by the fact that the adoption of the new calendar did not take place simultaneously in all countries.

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