

Letters

Intrigue in Italy

John Walsh's comments about Italian universities (2 Aug., p. 451) are both accurate and charitable. To those *emigrati* who left Italy 20 or more years ago, his remarks indicate that the Italian academic situation has changed only for the worse.

Personally I doubt that "the early success of a strong university reform program [may offer] a way between stagnation and chaos." In fact, who would propose, fight for, and lead such a reform? The tragedy is not so much the apathy and corruption of the old oligarchy but rather the orientation of the new generation. The latter may have learned precious little in the humanistic or scientific field but, like the older group, it is already well versed in the art of intrigue and academic politics. This is not intended as an accusation against Italian students or graduates, but rather as an indictment of the Italian system in which intrigue is the necessary ingredient for survival and achievement of a sort. In brief, the present system is self-perpetuating.

Walsh's and Consolazio's articles (1), accurate as they are, leave unanswered the crucial question: what can be done? It seems to me that Italy could use one or more institutions that would do for her what the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research did at the beginning of the century for American medicine. It is necessary to demonstrate to the Italian students that different systems exist for teaching, for learning, and for achieving professional success. Words, either from inside or outside her boundaries, would not do it; only the implementation of an active program could sow the seed of a different breed of scientists and educators. Unfortunately, such a program could not be undertaken by Italy alone because the "establishment" is too powerful at the present. The experience of the "Gaslini Foundation" demonstrated many years ago that the Italian government could be persuaded to seize "unorthodox" private institutions and to assimilate them in the state-controlled univer-

sity system. Many Italians, however, look with great expectations to joint programs between Italian and foreign institutions (2) because these ventures, even if partly subjected to the Italian system, offer some guarantees against seizures, abrupt terminations, or multiple scandals by virtue of the participation of foreign elements and foreign funds.

These programs may produce the individuals capable of formulating and implementing a reform of higher education. The question remains whether Italy can afford to wait for the leaders of a future *controlled* reform before reforms of a different kind may rock her ancient and glorious walls.

NICOLA DI FERRANTE
Department of Biochemistry,
Baylor University College of Medicine,
Houston, Texas 77025

References

1. W. V. Consolazio, *Science* 133, 1892 (1961).
2. J. Walsh, *ibid.* 156, 1582 (1967).

Tougher Competition in Teaching

Teaching as a new career for scientists who are contemplating retirement has been approached optimistically by Weiner (Letters, 14 June), and pessimistically by Howard (Letters, 2 Aug.). I believe both have been misled in their analyses of the situation. Like Howard, I considered retiring early from industry in order to enter teaching in September 1968. After serious correspondence with about 50 schools in the geographical areas of my interest, I also did not secure a position. My correspondence was extensive and I believe most of these schools took a fair and objective view of my abilities and weaknesses in their appraisals. The main problem, in my opinion, lies in the number and kind of positions open in this particular year to the young recent Ph.D. The graduate schools are in a state of chaos because of Selective Service; budget cuts on Capitol Hill have removed many glamorous opportunities in space technology and the

biological sciences; industry has slackened its mad pursuit of the new Ph.D.; thus, some 50 to 60 percent of these young scientists find themselves seeking teaching jobs instead of the usual 30 to 40 percent. My competition was not only tough, which I expected, but it was present in large numbers, which I didn't expect; 1968 is quite a different year from 1967, when the journals were full of editorials citing the dire need of the colleges for qualified science faculty.

I am confident that the pendulum will swing and that supply and demand will again come into balance. I hope it will be soon; but when that time comes, there will again be opportunity for those who have kept young in their hearts and minds to serve the academic community in scientific leadership.

WINSLOW H. HARTFORD
309 Southfield Drive,
Fayetteville, New York 13066

Behavioral Scientists: Now and Then

Certain Fellows of the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, propose a study of campus unrest and raise some disturbing questions (5 July, p. 20). In discussing ways to *deal with* and *prevent* these protests, the group states its position by "affirming there is an implicit assumption that violent or destructive behavior, of itself, is undesirable and self-defeating." They appear to be proposing a study of an activity which they condemn. Is this, then, a behavioral science study whose ultimate goal is not the understanding of human behavior, but the suppression of dissent, or at least some forms of dissent?

To a behavioral scientist interested more in understanding than in manipulating human behavior, this study could raise some interesting questions: (i) What kind of bias will be injected into the findings, considering that the investigators are working from a position of strong prejudgment? (ii) How will the findings advance understanding? and (iii) Is behavioral science properly used as an instrument of control, however desirable the control may appear? (Campus unrest is not wholly undesirable; my experience on several campuses has convinced me that a modicum of ferment and activity is necessary in an institution of learning.)