studies of ribosome structure have turned up deep epistemological and cosmological problems—such as (i) a "function emergent" of ribosomes (thus freeing us at last from pedestrian Watson-Crick reductionism, which "involves a deep faith in the overworked hydrogen bond and a considerable amount of hand waving," and allowing molecular biology to become airborne, Teilhard-bound); (ii) the possibility that protein synthesis might not even obey "the first and second laws of thermodynamics (or their statistical analogs)"; and (iii) the even more revolutionary notion that the "physical laws governing the domain of molecular genetics" might not even possess the quality of "uniqueness"—I must admit that 3 years ago molecular biology could not have been all that dead. But now, when Kurland is at last able to "describe current work on the ribosomal proteins, work which may eventually provide the key to the mechanism of protein synthesis," I fear that time *is* running out once more. No, hold it! If protein synthesis does not obey the second law, then time cannot run out, and molecular biology marches on forever.

GUNTHER S. STENT
Department of Molecular Biology, University of California, Berkeley 94720

The Drinking Driver

I strongly protest the decidedly unscientific viewpoint reflected in the editorial "Agnew, alcohol, automobiles, and assessment" (28 Aug., p. 819) by Robert S. Morison, and I am disappointed that *Science* failed to detect the editorial for what it is—a sweeping generalization.

Morison failed to recognize the Department of Transportation's new alcohol safety countermeasures program, a realistic effort to restrict the driving privileges of alcoholics who demonstrably constitute the actual menace to highway safety. Normal social drinking is not a major cause of highway accidents.

Moreover, the writer of the editorial apparently was unfamiliar with authoritative reports by the DOT on the subject of Highway Safety; by HEW on the subject of alcohol use and alcoholism; with the 5-year study completed by Rutgers University's Center of Alcohol Studies; and with the published research of independent investigators such as Ira H. Cisin, Julian Waller, and Selden Bacon (*1–8*).

Further, the editorial failed to reflect any knowledge of medical and scientific findings that alcoholism is an illness. Alcohol abuse is known to be symptomatic of a deeper underlying disorder. The distilling industry has never condoned excessive drinking and has long supported basic research into the causation and possible methods of treatment of alcoholism.

Also, I am somewhat dismayed that you would permit an apparent political attack on the Vice President of the United States. There are other media available to Morison where he can pursue his point of view without subjecting the scientific community to an unnecessary aggravation.

GEORGE W. PACKOWSKI
6 Tall Timber Road, Mount Kisco, New York 10549

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2. R. A. McFarland, *Police* **10**, 66 (March–April 1966).
3. ———, *Traffic Safety Res. Rev.* **12**, 71 (1968).
4. *On the Level: Traffic Safety Monog. No. 1* (National Safety Council, Chicago, Ill., 1969).
5. *Report of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety*, Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1968).
6. J. A. Waller, in *The Prevention of Highway Injury: Proceedings of a Symposium 19–21 April 1967* (Highway Safety Research Institute, Univ. of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1967), pp. 30–37.
7. J. A. Waller, *Quart. J. Stud. Alc.*, Suppl. No. 4, 118 (1968).
8. *Alcohol and Highway Safety Report*, Dept. of Transportation (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1968).

I am sorry that I did not know of the Department of Transportation's new alcohol safety countermeasures program at the time I wrote the editorial. It may be worth more extensive publicity than it has received.

Careful examination of five of the eight references mentioned by Packowski (the others were not immediately obtainable) does not reveal anything that seems in conflict with my editorial. All of them stress the very high correlation between drinking and serious automobile accidents and recommend various courses of action to reduce the driving of automobiles by persons with blood alcohol above stated minimums.

In the short space available, I did not think it necessary to discuss the etiology and pathogenesis of alcoholism. Indeed, I assumed that most readers would already know that problem drinking is widely regarded as an illness. My purpose was to direct attention to the evidence that methods have been found to reduce some of the most serious effects of the disease both on the sufferer himself and the public generally. Rereading of the editorial reveals nothing that suggests that the distilling industry ever "condoned excessive drinking."

In a year in which so much attention has been directed to the importance of science and scientists taking more responsibility for the secondary and tertiary effects of advanced technology, I find nothing inappropriate in an article which calls attention to the difficulties such scientists will encounter if the political leadership of the country persists in basing its recommendations on conventional wisdom rather than on scientific evidence.

ROBERT S. MORISON
Program on Science, Technology and Society, 632 Clark Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14850

Vietnam Defoliation Saves Lives

The article "Ecological effects of the war in Vietnam" (1 May, p. 544) and the letter (11 Sept.), both by Orians and Pfeiffer, do not constitute good science. Not even bad science! A more revealing position can be found in the report to the Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Development of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics dated 8 August 1969 and entitled "A technology assessment of the Vietnam defoliant matter—a case history" (p. 60):

> In the press interview in New York upon his return, Professor Pfeiffer expanded somewhat on this report. He observed that it was "completely unrealistic" to expect military commanders to abstain from defoliation actions. "There is no question about it," he said. "They save American lives." On a 65-mile journey by armed boat from Saigon to the sea, he said, "We scarcely saw a living plant." However, he added that had the vegetation not been destroyed, he and his companion would probably not have returned alive.

When it comes right down to it, given a choice between the life of a tree and the life of an American soldier, we must choose in favor of the life of an American soldier. . . .

GEORGE R. CHAMLIN
Continental Chemiste Corporation, 2256 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60612