# Letters

## "Science Is Too Important to Stay Out of Politics"

Recently we met with our congressman, Jerry L. Pettis (R–Calif.), to discuss the consequences of the squeeze in science funding. Pettis, formerly a member of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, thought that scientists had done a poor job of communicating with Congress. His major points were:

1) Spokesmen for agencies such as NIH and NSF present too apologetic a case for basic science and seldom make it clear why investigative work is so vital to our nation's continued progress. Reports from these agencies were not always intelligible to laymen unfamiliar with the subject matter.

2) Science needs strong advocates in Congress, such as those supporting the military, farm groups, automotive, petroleum, and textile industries.

3) Congressmen want to cite to constituents specific scientific achievements which have been supported with tax dollars. Few congressmen understand that cutbacks in appropriations affect not only basic research, but also the training of faculty, the education of physicians, and the delivery of health care. Congress is considering emergency aid to medical education. If biomedical research is to obtain additional funds in the near future it will probably have to be tied to appropriations for health care and education.

We realize that this was only one encounter with one congressman. At the risk of being overly simplistic we suggest the following:

1) We should have similar meetings with the other members of the House and Senate, especially those legislators who are members of the committees on science appropriations. *Science* should keep its readers up-to-date on the membership of these committees.

2) Our national scientific organizations (AAAS, ACS, FASEB, and others) should appoint committees in each state to contact their congressmen and inform them of the acute need for increased scientific appropriations. These organizations should also appoint scientists who can testify before the congressional committees and present a more unified voice for science. The groups should also have periodic meetings with administrators of HEW, the Office of Management and Budget, members of the President's Science Advisory Committee, and other presidential advisers.

3) We should write our legislators and members of the executive branch of government, sending them reports of our research written in language they can understand, with an interpretation of our results, emphasizing the significance and relevance of the work. Specific instances should be cited where research has been cut back, indicating important projects that would have been done if funds were available. Society newsletters should keep us better informed on bills containing scientific legislation. It might be worthwhile for our legislators to receive complementary copies of *Science, Scientific American, Science News*, and related publications.

4) Our national organizations should choose spokesmen with proven ability to interest and convince Congress and the public of the value of a healthy scientific community. We need lobbyists who can interpret science to the legislators in lively layman's terms and keep them informed on scientific questions.

5) We should work to elect representatives who support science. *Science* should publish legislators' voting records on bills containing science legislation.

6) Finally, it might be worthwhile for more able and articulate scientists to enter the administration of HEW and other agencies, or to seek elective office. A few physicists and physiologists in Congress might have a profound influence for good on our national course.

In conclusion, "Some have said that science is too important to get mixed up in politics. The fact is that today science is too important to stay out of politics" (*1*).

LAWRENCE D. LONGO
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**Reference**

1. L. A. DuBridge, *Science* **164**, 1137 (1969).

## Forerunner of Molecular Biology

Concerning Warren Weaver's letter (6 Nov.) on the origin of the term "molecular biology," I would like to mention that in 1903 Léo Errera (8158–1905), professor of botany at the Université libre de Bruxelles, gave a course to the graduate students, the title of which was: "Cours de physiologie moléculaire." In the introduction to this course, which was published in the *Recueil de l'Institut Botanique de Bruxelles*, vol. VII, in 1907, it is clearly stated that "considering the extremely small size of the machinery —cells, ducts, fibers, etc., where the elementary processes of life take place, it is with the forces, often designated in physics as molecular forces, that is, forces effective over very small distances, that we will be dealing with. Therefore we can name this aspect of physiology, mo'ecular physiology" (my translation). This may be of interest to those interested in the history of molecular biology.

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## FDA: Clinically Meaningful Data

In a letter (25 Sept.), Robert L. Dean of Smith Kline & French expressed concern over guidelines to be proposed by the Food and Drug Administration for clinical evaluation of drugs. His criticism was directed toward the potential for rigidity that these would assume to the exclusion of scientific judgment.