

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Science serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

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The Editing of Science

Each week *Science* prints about the same amount of material as do leading newsweeklies. We strive for and usually maintain standards of accuracy that compare favorably with the best of them. Yet we must achieve this with a fraction of the staff engaged by other weekly magazines. We could not accomplish our tasks and maintain standards were it not for the generous cooperation of many scientists. They provide letters, articles, book reviews, scientific reports, technical comments, and meetings reports. More than 6000 reviewers help us in the selection of these materials. This cooperation arises naturally from members of a community who are accustomed to working unselfishly toward constructive ends. Final decisions must be made in our editorial offices, but, in terms of creating material for *Science* and judging it, the community-at-large is a considerably greater factor than is the staff.

Because *Science* is published by AAAS, members rightly consider that the content of the magazine is a matter about which they are entitled to form and to advocate opinions. In consequence, there is rarely a time when the editors are not under various kinds of pressure to publish or not to publish this or that.

The members of AAAS include a heterogeneous group of scientists, engineers, physicians, and others. They represent many disciplines and specialties. They are drawn from academia, government, industry, and private practice. Broad spectrums of ages and political attitudes are also represented. When permutations and combinations of background and interest are taken into account, few readers can be expected to have identical needs or views as to what should be published in *Science*.

One issue is the balance between material that is strictly scientific and material that is concerned with interactions of science and technology with society. Surveys indicate that the majority of our readers are working scientists, often with teaching responsibilities, who are more interested in new developments in science and in review articles than in public affairs. These scientists are often critical of our policy-oriented material. Those who have administrative responsibilities follow such material closely and value it, while paying less attention to the more technical content.

Tensions and emotions are aroused over scientific material, but they are minor in comparison with those arising when political issues are involved. Policy matters can be discussed with good humor and objectivity—as long as they are not in the middle of an active political arena. So strong are the emotions of the political process that the question can be raised as to whether a scientific organization can survive if more than a modest fraction of its activities are oriented to the political issues of the moment.

But the future of civilization is dependent on the wise use of science and technology, and members of AAAS cannot responsibly avoid participation in some of the opinion-making and decision-making processes. *Science's* policy in this matter is to attempt to give fair representation to the broad spectrum of views. On many occasions the Board of Directors of AAAS have considered the role of *Science*, and they have reiterated that it should function as a forum rather than as an official spokesman.

Audience participation in the editing of *Science* produces an unending series of problems major and minor. Without that participation, however, life would be dull and the magazine would be neither interesting nor consequential.—PHILIP H. ABELSON