

Letters

Rebuttal

Less than a month after the interruptions at the AAAS meeting, *Science* published three letters and one editorial (22 Jan.), all demonstrating a lack of understanding of the causes, manifestations, and remedies. As a member of the AAAS, a paid registrant at the December meeting, a witness just a few rows behind the "needle" incident, a member of Chicago's Alliance to End Repression, and cochairman of the Concerned Argonne Scientists—I am requesting equal space for rebuttal.

Consider the circumstances: The AAAS invited the public to an "intellectual holiday." The symposia "Crime, Violence, and Social Control" commenced with a session on "The Individual and Violence." These are gut topics very much in the public domain. To attempt an aseptic abstracted symposium without allowing for radical input is consistent with charges that science is primarily a form of mental self-stimulation. Had arrangements been made (i) to include the dissidents in the panel and advance program, (ii) to provide concurrent or additional symposia on the same topic to be organized by the radicals, or (iii) to adjust the format of the meeting, in view of the interruptions, so that each issue raised could be discussed rather than deferred, then possibly a genuine inquiry could have taken place.

The Concerned Argonne Scientists indeed did cooperate with SESPA (Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action) in sponsoring a well-attended (and behaved) evening symposium in two parts: "Science Against the People" and "The Health Care Crisis in Chicago." We appreciate the facilities provided by the AAAS; perhaps AAAS may learn some lessons from our experience in blending the establishment with the outsiders to bring about an informative exchange.

While my colleagues and I, nourished in the classical scientific discourse, lament the tactics employed at the formal sessions by the obstructionists—aimed at capitalizing on the readiness of the press to vivify an otherwise obtuse

assignment—we recognize that the whole phenomenon cannot be wished away. Chaotic disruption can be avoided by recognizing the *pretense* inherent in some of the sessions: loaded subjects as crime, violence, and social control were preempted with a nonrepresentative selection of speakers, thus providing a clear invitation for intervention. . . .

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We attended the Chicago meeting to promote and provoke discussion about ideas and an analysis of science that are systematically excluded or ignored by the established scientific community. None of the four pieces in the 22 January issue dealt with our ideas. Instead they consisted of name-calling attacks on our methods ("Nazi stormtroopers," "make-believe radicals," and "self-styled scientists").

The four writers vigorously defend free speech and free discourse and then argue for suppressing ours. They fail to understand that people do not engage in disruptive tactics in order to have their ideas heard unless those ideas are denied access to the usual platforms of expression. The AAA\$ social issue symposia were organized so as to preclude radically different perspectives, and structured so that a few selected "experts" could utilize almost all of the allotted time. For example, entitling a symposium "The Generation Gap" locates the issue as between young and old rather than between the small minority currently in power and the vast majority of the people whose interests are not being served. Further, it was only in sessions that we opened up, such as one of the violence symposia, that anyone in the audience could express his ideas.

The more sensible of our critics decried the absence of a rational exposition of our views and implied that we lack a comprehensive analysis. Let them direct their complaints to Philip Abelson, editor of this journal, who recently refused to publish such an analysis (by Zimmerman and Meyers), which called attention to the ways in which most of

our scientific work, irrespective of our intentions, is used by the government and giant corporations to maintain and extend the American empire abroad and to control and exploit people at home. The paper in question certainly was a piece of advocacy, but, as one of Abelson's referees pointed out, that is exactly what this journal should be publishing if it is really committed to a free exchange of ideas, since it frequently carries articles which strongly advocate established views. Censorship of this kind is not new to the pages of *Science*. . . .

We refer to the AAA\$ as such not because we find it a rich organization, as Abelson assumed, but rather because it represents the American scientific establishment, which currently mainly serves the interests of the rich and powerful. They have always defined freedom as the right to listen to them or "be free to go away," and any voice of protest as an infringement on *their* freedom. Abelson, Conrad, Humphreys, and Suedfeld may indeed be free, but science and the people are not.

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I, too, was angry at the disruption of sessions I wanted to hear. I, too, was angry that when the ultraliberals did have the floor, they had so little to say. But I think you have seriously misread the meaning of the disruptions.

The AAA\$ symbol implies control by big money, not that you have it. Example: When the report of the use of defoliants in Vietnam was presented, it was mentioned that the AAAS could not afford another such investigation for perhaps 10 years. Every 10 years the AAAS can afford to document that our government has been lying to us again? That is hardly meeting the need.

Twice, now, responsible commissions have looked into the facts and made recommendations, only to have President Nixon reject the findings *in advance*. How could it be made plainer that knowledge and thought are acceptable only if they agree with the prejudices (prejudgments) of a power elite?

Power is always political, and science is in the service of the politically powerful. The disruption of the AAAS meetings is primarily a political act, and it says that the country cannot continue on its present course without meeting deter-

mined opposition. It is the early warning signal of approaching revolution.

When politicians declare the earth is flat, the place for a good scientist is at the stake—or in Canada.

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I must express a form of pleasure over Abelson's editorial and the letters. . . . And there is delight in seeing a member of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice express "exquisite ambivalence" over the "beatific expression" of a woman after she stabbed a demonstrator. Everyone seems to be reacting so normally. The reaction, as I have seen time and time again, is one of shock—shock that we too might be less than perfect, less than just, less than honest.

I fear that it is the turn of the scientist to discover the hatred, bigotry, and elitism which lie quiet but dominant within us all.

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Mass Transit: A Cop Out

If the automobile is the best mass transportation system for Los Angeles, (Wilson, Letters, 29 Jan.), then it is the best system for most of these United States. With dispersal of city residents to the suburbs, there is no way a mass transit system could be made convenient for everyone on the same cost basis that I can operate my car. The only way a mass transit will work is if the ivory tower dreamers and politicians (who, by the way, smell another way to fleece the taxpayers) confiscate our automobiles through prohibitive taxation and legislation.

For many Americans the automobile is more of a tradition than motherhood and apple pie. And flashy, late model cars are not limited to the so-called affluent, because they can be found in the city ghetto as well as in the hollows of Appalachia. I own two American-made cars and a motorcycle. I like my own transportation system, it goes when I want it to go, where I want it to go, and at any reasonable speed from 1 to 100 miles per hour.

Cars are sporting too. Who hasn't enjoyed a little traffic-light drag racing on the way to or from work? It can make one of those dull days interest-

ing. A little road racing on back roads can be good for the soul too.

Before some of these isolated dreamers try to foist mass transit on us, they ought to climb into their foreign-made cars, which litter college campuses, and interview us fellows who enjoy our own personal "mass" transit system. The aim of long-range plans should be to construct more and better highways to facilitate automobile travel and not to cop out for mass transit which would transport people with all the comfort and dignity of livestock on the way to market.

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Clearer Skies for Astronomy

I was greatly interested in "Star bright, street light, which will they see tonight?" (5 Feb., p. 461).

To protect paintings with fugitive pigments from ultraviolet light damage we use Rohm and Haas Plexiglas UF-4. The absorption cut-off point for this Plexiglas is 400 millimicrons and it does not change color temperature of the light source to yellow. Perhaps car dealers in Tucson would not find this filter objectionable because their wares would retain all their various hues (when filters are installed over the mercury vapor lamps).

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Deluged by Conservation Appeals

As a long-time member of the Save-the-Redwoods League, a more recent member of the Sierra Club, and a member of the faculty of a College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, I have wound up on the list of prospective contributors to organizations devoted to conservation, a cause very dear to my heart. During 1970, I received solicitations for membership or contributions from no less than 14 conservation organizations, as follows:

America the Beautiful Fund; American Forestry Association; California Tomorrow; Defenders of Wildlife; National Audubon Society; National Parks Association; Regional Exchange-An-Information

Service by People for Open Space; Save San Francisco Bay Association; Save-the-Redwoods League; Sempervirens Fund of Conservation Associates; Sierra Club; The Wilderness Society; Trustees for Conservation; World Wildlife Fund.

Not being familiar with the advertising and public relations business, I have no way of estimating the cost of these mailings, but they were all well printed and must represent a very sizable sum when sent to tens of thousands of people.

I do not doubt that the overlap between the activities of certain of these organizations is small. Nor am I persuaded that the purposes of conservation would best be served by a single, monolithic organization. Nevertheless, I feel that the concerned citizen, being importuned by so many groups all speaking in the name of conservation, might well wonder about the merit of many of them, and may resent the appreciable fraction of his contribution which is likely to be spent on still more mutually competing appeals. Has not the time come for the leaders of conservation groups to join forces and see if they can devise a more rational method for advancing this vital cause?

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Deficiencies of "Pass-Fail"

The following quotations are from "U. of California at Santa Cruz: New deal for undergraduates?" by Luther Carter (15 Jan., p. 153):

One measure of the commitment to this primary mission was the faculty's decision to grade students on a "pass-fail" basis.

So keen is the competition for admission here that UCSC draws heavily from the top 5 percent of California high school graduates.

It would appear that UCSC carefully considers the grades of the high school graduates who apply and rewards those with the highest grades by admission. Then, as it continues with their education, they deny such distinction to those who accomplish the most; and also deny to those who would engage their services after graduation the capability of selecting the most fitting applicants. To be consistent, UCSC registrants should be selected by lots from all high school graduates.

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