

LETTERS

Appointments to Working Government Councils

In December 1972, Frank Sinatra was appointed a member of the National Advisory Heart and Lung Council, to fill a 1-year unexpired term. This council, by law, consists of 5 ex officio members and 18 members appointed by the secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). The National Heart, Blood Vessel, Lung and Blood Act of 1972 states that 5 of the 18 "shall be selected from members of the general public who are leaders in the fields of fundamental or medical sciences or in public affairs." Neither I nor any other council member questions the principle of appointing nonscientists to the council, or the wisdom shown by the secretary of HEW in the appointment of any individual. However, the scientists on the council do have a right to expect full participation of all members in the heavy work load of the council, and to expect that the nonscientists will bring new concepts and fresh points of view to the council's discussions—and express these effectively. The council must meet from

four to six times a year, and members must spend much time between meetings on the council's business.

Mr. Sinatra accepted appointment to the council but did not attend even part of the four council meetings held since then (15 to 17 March, 29 and 30 March, 13 to 15 June, and 17 and 18 September), nor did he contribute to the council's work between meetings. Since his term has now expired, why bring the matter to public attention? Simply in the hope that the public may ask the secretary of HEW that there be no more honorary or courtesy appointments to working councils whose responsibilities require the dedicated efforts of all its members. Surely the government can find ways to honor those whose special talents or contributions deserve recognition without lessening the effectiveness and prestige of its working councils.

JULIUS H. COMROE, JR.
*Cardiovascular Research Institute,
School of Medicine, University of
California, San Francisco 94122*

The Albatross Award

In the cover story (News and Comment, 7 Sept., p. 926) on giving the bird to Roger Revelle, Robert Gillette approaches, but doesn't quite manage, Coleridge's

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

An ancient Oceanographer, wishing to be rid of "that damned dusty creature" and its attendant drought, might shift from "slimy things did crawl with legs upon a slimy sea" to blessing the water snakes:

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare.

For that inward grace no award is
needed.

Who killed *this* albatross?

ROLAND WALKER

*Department of Biology,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute,
Troy, New York 12181*

The story on the Albatross award, would-be Nobelists, and AMSOC (American Miscellaneous Society) reminds me of our own system of

