Wildavsky's comment that technology assessment (TA) and other management information systems are being "established without a single successful demonstration, . . . are tried everywhere, and . . . do not work anywhere" triggers a question: How do we know whether or not TA works? I am troubled not so much by the performance of TA to date as by the dim prospects of rationally evaluating and improving performance in the future (*1*).

Such prospects would be enhanced by the performance of *multiple* (for example, three) TA's of given topics. Multiple TA's would enable comparison of usefulness to various parties, post hoc evaluation of the accuracy of forecasts, and estimation of the relative value per dollar invested—each as a function of who the assessors were, methods employed, and topics assessed. Users would be better able to gauge reliability and would be ensured a broader perspective.

While it has been asserted that a TA realistically costs about $200,000 (*2*), the lack of TA evaluations makes it difficult to determine whether a project costing $5,000 is less worthy than a $500,000 venture (*3*). Performance of multiple, coterminous TA's at different funding levels could clarify this issue. One could surmise that the cost would properly be a function of the technological complexity involved and the needs of the users.

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References

1. This relates to the basic question of social experimentation. See A. M. Rivlin, *Science* **183**, 35 (1974).
2. V. T. Coates, *Technology and Public Policy* (George Washington University, Washington, D.C., 1972), vol. 1, pp. 2–12.
3. This cost range is suggested in U.S. Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, *Report on the Technology Assessment Act of 1972* (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1972), p. 21.

Exchanges with China

The informative article by Harrison Brown, "Scholarly exchanges with the People's Republic of China [PRC]" (11 Jan., p. 52), makes it clear that the Committee on Scholarly Communication has a tremendous task in the development of scientific exchanges between the United States and the PRC. As Brown states, the committee obviously cannot expedite exchanges in every field. However, I wonder about a system of priorities that resulted in the selection of a group of Americans to discuss the eradication of schistosomiasis, but not a group to discuss the eradication of venereal diseases.

Epidemic gonorrhea and communicable syphilis currently rank first and fourth, respectively, among reportable diseases in the United States, and the incidences are rising. It has been reported (*1*) that venereal diseases have, for all practical purposes, been eradicated in China. So far, there has been no evidence to refute such reports. Therefore it would seem that, in the order of priorities, one of the "particular areas in which Americans potentially have a great deal to learn from the Chinese" would be venereal disease control.

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1. E. G. Dimond, *J. Am. Med. Assoc.* **218**, 1552 (1971).

I completely agree with Kuhn that the eradication of venereal disease in China is a great accomplishment. However, it may be attributed, not to advances in medical science unknown in the United States, but to China's very effective social mobilization and public education campaigns. The Committee on Scholarly Communication with the PRC has expressed considerable interest in sending scholars to China to study social organization in city neighborhoods and communes, but these programs have not yet been accepted by the PRC.

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Drug Education Conference

Nicholas Wade (News and Comment, 14 Dec. 1973, p. 1114) reports on a travel program which was presented to the participants of the International Congress on Drug Education, held in Montreux, Switzerland, in October 1973. This travel program, which