regenerate for 100 years in fact comes from the NAS report: "An estimate based on a model suggests that, under present conditions of use and natural regrowth, it may take well over 100 years for the mangrove area to be reforested" (*3*, p. S2436).

Finally, on a subject not discussed by Thimann, the AAAS commission found that the crop destruction program, although largely confined to the Highlands, ". . . may have had a profound impact on a large fraction of the total Montagnard population of South Vietnam . . ." (*1*, p. 6807). While the NAS committee made no quantitative estimate, this concern is certainly supported by the NAS committee's Highland interviews and by its aerial photographic studies of crop damage and population displacement from both crop destruction missions and missions designated as defoliation.

The two groups, independently studying difficult problems under conditions far from conducive to scientific inquiry and in spite of some important unresolved questions, nonetheless arrived at remarkably similar conclusions.

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References and Notes

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2. National Academy of Sciences Committee on the Effects of Herbicides in Vietnam, *Effects of Herbicides in South Vietnam*, part A (National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1974).
3. *Congr. Rec.*, 28 February 1974, pp. S2430–S2442.
4. The signers constitute the AAAS Herbicide Assessment Commission.

Language Skills of Homo sapiens

May I comment on the interesting debate about the "use of language" by chimpanzees between Mistler-Lachman and Lachman and Rumbaugh, Gill, and von Glasersfeld (Technical Comments, 6 Sept., p. 871).

While the arguments are splendid on both sides, is it not a pity that the language skills of *Homo sapiens* are nowadays so degraded? For example, "utilize" and "utilization" = use, while "We are fully cognizant of the fact" = we know.

My ancestors on the edges of Man's domain in the 18th and 19th centuries of your era would have grimaced to hear such verbiage from the lips of your early explorers. Please, *Homo sapiens scientificus*, keep your ancient skills.

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A Scientist's Campaign

Much has been said about the need for scientists to become directly involved in government. I tried. I recently made an unsuccessful attempt to get elected to the U.S. Congress.

My campaign for the Democratic Party nomination to the U.S. House of Representatives was against a well-intrenched incumbent in the diverse but largely conservative Sixth District of Maryland. My opponent supported the supersonic transport, the seniority system in Congress, maximally lenient strip-mining legislation, and the bombing of Cambodia. He opposed revenue sharing, increases in the minimum wage, funding for research on thermonuclear fusion, consumer protection legislation, and United Nations sanctions against the import of Rhodesian chrome. His voting record on environmental issues was rated 5 percent by the League of Conservation Voters. He has called for severe curtailment of government spending as a major means of bringing inflation under control. His votes have not been generous to science.

I received about 26 percent of the total vote, ranging from 18 percent in some precincts to 65 percent in others. My campaign cost about $5600, of which $2100 was from donations. The remaining $3500 was "loaned" by me to the campaign. My opponent received and spent over three times as much.

I spent $1950 to mail campaign literature and solicitations for funds to 20,000 fellow scientists. Only 60 responses were received, and these were largely from people that I knew personally. The money received was less than enough to pay for the postage.

While other interpretations are possible, the results of this experiment suggest to me that scientists in general are not yet sufficiently concerned about the influence of government upon their affairs to support reasonably qualified candidates who are clearly concerned about their interests.

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Iron in Enriched Bread

Weinberg's article "Iron and susceptibility to infectious disease" (31 May, p. 952) emphasizes a critical, but overlooked, aspect of iron metabolism. Weinberg points out that, since high iron levels in mammalian hosts favor bacterial invaders, infections such as tuberculosis may become activated, and other infections may result. He states that "if hosts are hyperferremic (because of . . . excess iron introduced by way of diet or infection). . . they are exceedingly susceptible to even a small number of invading bacterial or fungal pathogens." He also points out that low serum iron levels may be a defense against tumor cells.

In the light of these concepts, the attempt of the Food and Drug Administration to have bakers increase the iron content of enriched bread is irresponsible. Any further tampering with our food must be stopped.

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Fortunately, much of the iron added to flour is not assimilated (*1*, p. 48). However, research is needed to determine if nonassimilated iron alters intestinal microflora. Such alteration might be dangerous, especially in infants, and thus the proposal to fortify milk with iron must be considered very cautiously. Of some comfort are observations that "administration of iron to lactating cows, sows, and women is largely ineffective in raising the iron content of the milk to levels above normal" (*1*, p. 26).

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