

LETTERS

The "Case" of Sir Cyril Burt

Nicholas Wade's article (News and Comment, 26 Nov., p. 916) on the suspicion of fraud by the late Sir Cyril Burt reads like the scenario of an Agatha Christie novel. Since theories are rampant in this "who-dunnit," let me offer yet another alternative. The real Cyril Burt was murdered by his long lost identical twin brother in 1949. This brother, Bertie Burt, had been brought up quite differently from Cyril: in a household of forgers from a very early age. He had, however, almost the same high IQ as Cyril ($r = 0.771$) and was able to pass himself off as the professor. In order to hide any glaring deficits in his disguise he affected Ménére's disease so that Cyril's colleagues accepted difficulty in communicating with him. The motivation? Elementary. There was the status of knighthood, a pension from the university, and the prizes to be reaped for Cyril's lifetime of honest scientific contributions. Unfortunately for the brother, he found that the knighthood and prizes did not pay a penny and the pension was hardly worth having as the pound went down in value (the pension was based on 1930 salaries). The genetically clever but environmentally immoral Bertie then began to forge scientific papers in the mistaken belief that scientists were paid for each publication. To do this he enlisted the help of his stepsisters, Misses Howard and Conway, who were also skilled in forgery because of their similar environmental background. Like many forgers they made one fatal mistake—they did not change what they thought were serial numbers of IQ statistics, 0.771 and 0.944. Quickly Bertie found that science, like crime, does not pay and discovered the law of "publish and perish."

The clues are all there for this theory, and it has the added advantage of illustrating that environment is just as important as heredity.

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Page Charges, Postal Rate Hikes, and Membership Dues

A simple answer exists for circumventing the page-charge/advertisement/postal-rate-hike problem (News and Comment, 29 Oct., p. 502)—the creation

of separate author membership categories.

Many scientific societies are composed of members who are authors and members who are not. Since the authors generate more work and most of the expenses, they should be in a separate membership category, which, in all fairness, would pay higher dues. This added income would compensate for the revenues lost by dropping the page charges.

Although it would certainly be better to change the law, this may not be possible—for reasons that are usually only appreciated by lawyers or bureaucrats. Therefore, this absurd situation may indeed have to be neutralized with an equally preposterous strategy, such as the one I propose.

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Federal Funding of Medical Schools

Congress this year passed the Health Professions Educational Assistance Act (News and Comment, 12 Nov., p. 700), which requires that, in order to qualify for capitation funds, medical schools must waive their normal admission standards, including academic criteria, on behalf of expatriate medical students who failed to gain admission through the regular process. Most medical schools will accept this condition so that they can receive basic educational support and qualify their students for a federally insured loan program.

This law is the more significant in view of the experience of the past decade, during which some state legislatures have regulated admission policies, curricula, and departmental organizations of state medical schools and of some private medical schools dependent upon state subsidies. The resulting erosion of academic self-determination at the state level has intensified a climate in which the federal government now, for the first time in recent memory, has intervened directly in the fundamental academic process of medical schools.

There are numerous differences between medical schools and other schools in a university which cause them to be particularly vulnerable to, and perhaps peculiarly tolerant of, government regulation. They are more in the public domain because of large medical and health service programs. Extensive state and federal support has caused them to be-

come large, complex, and dependent, and most are somewhat isolated from other university schools.

However, medical schools are not the only parts of a university that are heavily dependent upon public funds and, therefore, upon a delicate relationship of respect and restraint that leaves to the universities their decisions about the selection of students and faculty, the curriculum, and the content of scholarly activity. That relationship will be maintained only if universities earn that respect and insist upon that restraint.

The long-term interest of society will be served and the quality of universities maintained if legislators and faculties resolve that universities shall remain free partners and not servants of government. That partnership is compromised when state or federal government regulates academic decisions, when medical schools are complacent in the face of such regulation, and when universities ignore the erosion of academic independence of any of their component schools.

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Scientists Involved in Environmental Litigation

I am gathering material for a study of the legal harassment of scientists and engineers by agents of local or federal governments arising out of environmental controversies. I would be happy to hear from *Science* readers who have been subjected to or threatened with litigation as a result of their attempts to protect the environment, warn of environmental dangers, or as a result of their giving expert testimony for plaintiffs in environmental cases.

In an account of their experiences, it would be helpful if correspondents described any costs or other damages they incurred as a consequence of the harassment; any final court findings if the suits were not dropped; whether or not they filed abuse of process, malicious litigation, or any other cause of action suits against parties guilty of the harassment; and the outcome of any such suits. I am also interested in any suggestions which the victims or their attorneys might have as to how this problem might be corrected.

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