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LETTERS

U.S. Chemists Withdraw from Soviet Symposium

Following are excerpts from a letter informing the Organizing Committee of the Symposium on Macromolecular Chemistry, scheduled to be held in Tashkent from 17 through 21 October, that the individuals there identified have decided to withdraw their participation.

It is with profound regret that we convey the decision, reached by each of us individually, to withdraw from the International Symposium on Macromolecular Chemistry sponsored by IUPAC [the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry] and to be held in Tashkent in October. We have come to this painful decision only after thorough assessment of the circumstances currently affecting international scientific cooperation and communication, which it is the purpose of IUPAC to encourage and promote. We ourselves attach the highest importance to this objective. Recent events in the Soviet Union, however, have so gravely hampered its realization as to force us to take this course as a matter of conviction and conscience.

Foremost in our minds at this moment is the spectre of the recent trials and current persecutions of scientists who, according to the evidence available, are guilty of no offense other than expression of their views. . . . We deplore the actions taken against them.

Although we respond compassionately to the plight of the victims of the harsh sentences imposed thus far on those indicted in the current campaign to suppress dissent, our concerns go beyond their fates, tragic as they are. Our broader concern is with the prevailing atmosphere of repression in the Soviet Union and its stifling effect on scientific communication and cooperation.

It is no secret that scientists in the USSR are subject to heavy surveillance. One cannot be unaware of the restrictions on their movements. They are not allowed to communicate with us freely and openly without, evidently, risking their positions, or perhaps hazarding more severe consequences. Visits with scientists in the USSR are constrained, and visits by Soviet scientists abroad are drastically curtailed by the Soviet authorities. Our invitations extended to highly qualified Soviet scientists have repeatedly been interdicted by your authorities. Last minute cancellations by Soviet scientists scheduled to participate in scientific meetings outside the USSR have become a commonplace manifestation of these restrictions. . . .

Under the conditions briefly indicated, international scientific cooperation cannot flourish and indeed cannot be effectively conducted. We reach this conclusion reluctantly and with grave disappointment, for all of us have long subscribed to the view that such cooperation offers great potential for enhancing understanding between peoples of our countries and for the betterment of the world at large. We have not, however, relinquished the hope that current obstructions to genuine scientific cooperation will be removed so that the mutual benefits of such cooperation can be realized. We urge you to prevail upon your government, by every means at your disposal, to alter its repressive policies and practices.

We have repeatedly communicated our views on the violations of the rights of scientists in the USSR to your authorities, including President Aleksandrov of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Our entreaties have elicited no response. Hence, we are obliged to take more stringent steps.

Please be assured that our high regard for our Soviet colleagues is unblemished by the circumstances that have led us to our own course of action. We are unwavering in our esteem of them and of their contributions to science. We are aware that current impediments to scientific collaboration are not of their doing. We should like to make clear also that our actions are taken independently of our government, and without any influence whatever from governmental officials or authorities. . . .

Professor M. Goodman, Professor H. Morawetz, and Dr. P. W. Morgan, each of whom concurs with the substance of this letter, have previously communicated their decisions in regard to the Tashkent meeting to the Organizing Committee.

In addition, Professor Charles G. Overberger, vice president of the University of Michigan, has canceled commitments for the meeting in Tashkent for related reasons.

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Hayflick's Reply

When one is engaged in suing, one cannot always talk. Now I wish to reply to two articles by Nicholas Wade (News and Comment, 9 April 1976, p. 125; 1 Oct. 1976, p. 41). This reply was sent to *Science* in November 1977 and was ultimately submitted by them to eight referees. I was then asked to respond to numerous questions and to document many of the statements that appear below. Wade's articles and his reply that follows these comments were (i) not sent to outside referees, (ii) not documented with references, and (iii) published without an 11-month delay. Specifically, Wade's articles discuss an investigation by James W. Schriver, director of the Division of Management Survey and Review at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), of my management of the human cell strain

WI-38 and a subsequent conference held at NIH to discuss the present state of the cells. My previous silence should not be taken for acquiescence, timidity, or guilt: Wade was only doing his job, but in so doing he was led to present as fact many of the wholly unmeritorious allegations with which I was suddenly confronted. These allegations have done damage to my reputation, though fortunately most of my colleagues familiar with the truth have dismissed them. That they are unmeritorious should be quite evident from the fact that, were they true, I could have faced a suit, or criminal charges, or both. In fact it is I who have been obliged to sue.

Naturally I wish to clear my own name. I am equally concerned, however, about the general threat which the treatment I received poses to *all* federally funded scientists. Do my colleagues know that it is possible for government bookkeepers to wander freely through research laboratories, look at records, question personnel in the absence of the principal investigator, report that investigator as a felon, and then have their unsubstantiated word believed by university administrators? Do they know that rebutted reports by such individuals, making not only moral but scientific and legal judgments, can be circulated gratis to the press and to their colleagues by a process of leakage and invocation of "freedom of information"? Or that when one demands equal time, these individuals will indeed offer to circulate one's reply—at a charge of \$11 a copy? And that in consequence one must dignify such conduct with a reply in *Science*?

These circumstances can lead inevitably to the indiscriminate destruction of scientific reputations because no system of safeguards now exists. Most scientists are unaware of the extreme vulnerability of their reputations even to unfounded allegations of wrongdoing. I implore my colleagues to seek procedural safeguards that will prevent nonscientists and the press from unjustly destroying the reputations of innocent people.

Wade's choice of a title for his article about me was designed, in my judgment, to attract readers' attention by casting a dispute in an unnecessarily sensational light. Such ploys are more typical of the sort of yellow journalism that is uncharacteristic of *Science*. The word "Tragedy" used by Wade in his title is more applicable to his reporting than to my situation because he produced an incomplete and inadequately researched article. Wade's characterization of the "Fall" of WI-38 is an unfounded opin-



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