United States to continue work at Cornell University. Amnesty International has just informed us that T. W. Kamil and I. Made Sutayasa were among the 10,000 prisoners freed by the Indonesian government in December 1977; both have returned to their families and are well. And Claudio Santiago Bermann, an Argentine psychiatrist, has been released from prison and is reported to be en route to Israel.

As for the apology, it is to Sir Andrew Huxley and to readers for an inadvertent distortion of his quotation (p. 505). By dropping a line, his entire meaning was changed. The currect statement follows with the dropped line in italics (*1*).

> The persecutions of the present day are not directed against scientific doctrines or against scientific enquiry as such; they are directed against individual citizens who have had the courage to speak up against oppressive features of the regimes under which we live. Among these brave individuals there are, for example, writers and medical men as well as scientists. The appropriate reaction therefore comes from us not as scientists but as citizens; if we wish to join in some corporate protest, it should be through a body whose prime concern *is with human rights and not through one whose prime concern* is with science. If a scientific body publicly takes a step whose justification is political and not scientific, it will lose the right to claim that it is acting purely in the defense of science on some future occasion when it wishes to speak out against, say, a repetition of the Lysenko affair.

I am indebted to Don K. Price of Harvard University for calling my attention to the error in the quotation.

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**Notes**

1. Excerpt from an address by Andrew Huxley to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, August 1977. Reprinted in *Chemical and Engineering News* (26 September 1977), p. 5.

## Nitrites: The Newberne Report

The News and Comment article (8 Sept., p. 887) on the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) move toward a nitrite ban states that an FDA-sponsored study by Paul Newberne at MIT provided "solid evidence that nitrites are themselves carcinogens." The MIT final report to the FDA (contract 74-2181 dated 18 May 1978) states, "The spleen . . . exhibited a condition referred to as immunoblastic cell proliferation. This change *may be* associated with developing lymphoma but evidence is lacking . . . *both* spleen and non spleen lymphomas were combined and there were *suggestions* for a nitrite effect; there was *not*, however, a convincing dose response [emphases added]." Further, "the data are *only suggestive* and the biological significance of nitrite associated lesions of the lymphoreticular system is *uncleared* [emphases added]."

The investigator did not report "solid evidence," and in fact carefully stated that "the results do not permit assigning nitrite a proximate carcinogenic role." He did state that "nitrite *appears* more a promotor of the neoplastic process than an initiator [emphasis added]."

It is imperative that the scientific community judge the facts and not the interpretations of advocates, reporters, or politicians. The nitrite issue is complex. Banning nitrite in cured meats would not substantially reduce human exposure (Reports, 30 June, p. 1487) and would in essence be another political nonsolution.

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## Data Evaluation in Biology

Stockmayer's excellent editorial (18 Aug., p. 577) calls attention to the paucity of evaluated data in the various handbooks and tabulations on which scientists must rely for numerical information. The focus of the editorial and its reference to a comprehensive survey sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences is entirely on physical and chemical data. As a life scientist, I must affirm that the need for evaluated data is just as great in biology and the health-related sciences. The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology has performed creditably in this field through its Biological Handbooks Office for almost two decades. Regrettably, this "unglamorous activity" is being terminated. I hope that an appropriate body of the National Research Council will take note. A replacement must be created for this critical capability. The alternatives involve (i) reliance on inadequately evaluated data with the attendant errors that would result or (ii) having each biological scientist spend a disproportionate amount of time becoming a data evaluator. Either alternative is considerably less efficient than priority funding of appropriate handbook efforts.

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