Letters

Harvard Public Health Dean

In his article on Dean Howard Hiatt and the Harvard School of Public Health (News and Comment, 27 Oct., p. 402), Eliot Marshall states that I wrote to President Bok of Harvard on 27 September to "protest the decision to keep Hiatt." This is not correct.

On behalf of the alumni association of the Harvard School of Public Health, I did convey to President Bok a number of our concerns with regard to recent developments at the school, but these did not include any comment on the continuance of Hiatt as dean. The alumni association has attempted to maintain the position of honest, objective, neutral observer, particularly with regard to individual personalities in the conflict, and will try to maintain this position as long as possible.

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Handicapped Scientists

I applaud and support many of the efforts of the AAAS to encourage handicapped persons to enter the scientific professions; however, I believe it is wrong to segregate the papers of handicapped scientists into a separate session which has the sole unifying characteristic that every participant has a relatively rare physical trait which society has labeled a handicap. During its annual meeting to be held in Houston in January 1979, the AAAS is devoting a special session to "Handicapped scientists: Some of their current contributions to biological and medical research" (Annual Meeting Program, 27 Oct., p. 418). No doubt this event was designed to demonstrate publicly that handicapped persons who are highly qualified researchers are participating actively in science. In my view, this point can be made far more effectively if presentations by handicapped scientists are integrated into other sessions. The work of a handicapped or other socially disadvantaged scientist must be heard and judged on an equal footing with that of others; it must not be segregated into special sessions, journals, or review panels. A handicap should be as irrelevant to the quality of a scientist's work as are sex, race, and the number of letters in one's surname. Social equality in science cannot be realized if we begin or continue to apply the doctrine of "separate and unequal."

A policy of social integration does not absolve society from the responsibility to make science and other intellectual activities attractive and available to those who are socially disadvantaged. On the contrary, we should improve science education for the handicapped, stimulate the development of appropriate technology, and make the general public aware of the many opportunities that science can offer a handicapped person. In fullfilling this responsibility, we may bend some rigid rules to accommodate the handicapped, but we should not alter fundamentally the standards of performance. We must always bear in mind that the principal objectives are social equality and integration.

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The Nitrite Debate

The debate on nitrites in meat (News and Comment, 8 Sept., p. 887) should be considered in the context of the carcinogenic implications of meat consumption in general. Epidemiological data in which incidence of cancer of the large intestine in national populations is correlated with per capita meat consumption suggest that this type of cancer could be almost completely eliminated by a replacement of grain for meat as our primary dietary source of essential amino acids (*1*). Since cancer of the large intestine ranks second among all cancers in deaths caused, accounting by itself for over 10 percent of all cancer deaths, this is hardly a trivial issue. In fact, it is a distinctly larger issue in terms of human suffering and loss of life than either the lymphatic cancer that might be caused by putting nitrites into meat or the botulism that might be caused by leaving nitrites out of meat. In any case it seems that all three problems (cancer of the large intestine associated with meat consumption, lymphatic cancer associated with nitrites in meat, and botulism associated with meat unprotected by nitrites) might be solved by public policy and private decisions to replace meats with grains as our major dietary protein source.

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References

1. J. Cairns, *Sci. Am.* **233** (No. 5), 64 (1975).

Cover Story

Upon arriving home I noticed my weekly issue of *Science* had arrived (10 Nov.). I glanced at the articles and retired to bed with a growing sense of trepidation. Upon awakening the next morning I walked my airedale, still consumed with the feeling that something was out of joint. (I can only liken this to Cassandra's having a tip-of-the-tongue experience.) After arriving at work, and while engaged in discussion with a colleague, I suddenly realized the source of my anxiety. As I inadvertently scanned the *Science* on my cluttered desk I noticed that atop the Grand Canyon, in bold bright orange, was "*Scienc*." The "*e*" may be silent, but its effects go far beyond mere pronunciation. I've heard of the visual cliff and cliff-hangers, but please, no more *e*'s dropping.

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When my secretary pointed out that even big, well-run outfits like the AAAS make proofreading mistakes, I assured her that the title on the cover of the 10 November *Science* was actually painted on the far wall of the Grand Canyon and that the near wall in the photograph was simply obscuring the terminal "*e*." She was most grateful to me for setting her straight.

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I loved your 10 November cover. However, you misplaced the letter "*i*" in *Scenic*.

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