

Handler was determined instead to play Galileo before the Inquisition. The Academy had spoken the truth, so what else mattered?—that was his position. “I remain convinced that appearances, and only appearances, have been offended in this instance,” he declared in a written statement.

Handler did not understand the point that different committees, regardless of what they say, can come before the public with different guarantees of their objectivity. His first words to the House committee were an objection to Donald Kennedy’s statement. “I do not understand Dr. Kennedy’s point, and I take great umbrage with his raising the issue of conflict, which I think is an utter irrelevance and should not belong in these discussions,” Handler said.

From under this cloud of umbrage, Handler did combat with inquisitor-in-chief Fred Richmond. Does it do you any good to prove you can out-argue the chairman of a House subcommittee? The president of the National Academy of Sciences evidently thought so. Richmond brought up the difference between the Food and Nutrition Board’s advice on cholesterol and that tendered by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services: Why hadn’t the Academy consulted with these agencies before issuing its report? Richmond asked. Handler turned the question into a freedom of speech issue, avowing that the Academy’s first amendment rights had not been revoked.

Richmond persisted: “As an advisor to the United States government, your obligation was to go to USDA and HEW and put together a task force and work this out, so that the American people would not now be totally confused,” he asserted. “It would be one rotten country if that were true: I deny that, sir,” Handler responded. Richmond retreated in disarray, waiting until the close of the hearing to deliver a heavy homily about the Academy having overstepped its mandate.

In terms of the public reception accorded to it, the report of the Food and Nutrition Board cannot be acclaimed as an outstanding success. Was the disaster the inevitable cost of speaking the truth in a controversial arena, or could the Academy have taken steps to forestall at least some of the criticism?

The critics’ claim that the Academy was confusing the public arose in part from the perception that the Food and Nutrition Board had entered the debate as merely another partisan, not as an umpire whose credentials put him above the battle. A more widely constituted group,

Jordanian Denies He Pirated Papers

Elias A. K. Alsabti, who has been accused by three separate groups of researchers of pirating a total of five scientific papers and whose whereabouts were unknown (*Science*, 27 June), has been located working in an internal medicine residency program at the University of Virginia. Owing to the publicity surrounding the charges of plagiarism, his patient care responsibilities have recently been suspended, pending a decision of a review board that will investigate the charges.

Alsabti carries a Jordanian passport, and for almost 3 years had worked in a variety of U.S. institutions, including the M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Houston, Texas. When charges of plagiarism were made this past spring, reporters in the United States and England tried to locate Alsabti. The trail, however, ended at the American University of the Caribbean (AUC) in Montserrat, the British West Indies, where Alsabti graduated in May 1980 with an M.D. degree.

It turns out that Alsabti in April 1980 applied to the University of Virginia medical residency program in Roanoke. He was accepted, and began work on 16 June. According to Hugh Davis, director of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Salem, Virginia—a hospital affiliated with the University of Virginia—Alsabti presented a diploma from AUC and papers showing he had passed the ECFMG, an examination administered to foreign medical graduates to see if they are qualified for practice in the United States (*Science*, 23 February 1979). Alsabti also presented letters of recommendation from South West Memorial Hospital in Houston, Texas, where he had most recently worked. Davis says neither the University of Virginia nor the VA hospital called any of Alsabti’s former employers to verify his record. Although Davis now says Alsabti’s admission to the residency program was otherwise in order, he also notes that “we probably should have made those calls.”

The *Science* article, in which charges of plagiarism were reviewed, had been brought to the attention of administrators at the University of Virginia by associate dean Harold B. Haley, and administrators there and at the VA hospital had a conference with Alsabti on 27 June that ended with the suspension of his patient care privileges. According to Davis, a review board will be set up in the near future to investigate the charges of plagiarism and Alsabti’s replies.

In a telephone interview on the same evening, Alsabti told this reporter that he had been fired from his job at the VA hospital that afternoon—fired unfairly. When mention was made of a paper by Daniel Wierda and Thomas L. Pazdernik [*European Journal of Cancer* **15**, 1013–1023 (1979)] that had appeared under Alsabti’s name in another journal [*Japanese Journal of Medical Science and Biology* **32**, 53–65 (1979)], Alsabti interrupted. “I did not publish that paper,” he said. “Somebody mailed it to the Japanese in my name.” When asked why someone would want to do that, he replied: “I don’t know. There are a lot of things involved.”

Alsabti also alleged in the short interview that other researchers had in fact pirated his papers. He would not, however, speculate on how or why this occurred.

He also denied that he had told any researcher or administrator at a U.S. institution that he was a blood relation of the Jordanian royal family, as alleged in the *Science* article. Another point on which he said the *Science* article was incorrect was the color of his automobile. “. . . I have a white Cadillac, not a yellow one. The yellow one was sold.”

In general, however, Alsabti would not discuss details of other allegations, specifically, the issue of plagiarism. He asserted that his reputation was ruined, and that the story was incorrect. “I just want to find a good lawyer,” he told *Science*, “who will represent me, to sue the magazine, to sue all the people involved in this writing. And then I will show up in court to prove point by point, and then I will leave it up to the court to judge if I have plagiarized anybody’s work or if somebody else is plagiarizing me.”

—WILLIAM J. BROAD