

Letters

Communications and National Security

In an article (News and Comment, 28 Aug., p. 990) concerning the government's antitrust case against the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T), reporter William J. Broad distorts and misconstrues numerous points. The article mentions the oral legal arguments held on 13 August on the question of admissibility of a Department of Defense document and the judicial weight which it should be given. Neither in the 28 August article nor in any subsequent article is it mentioned that on 20 August the federal judge hearing the case ruled that the document would be admitted into evidence but that, because the Department of Defense had obtained some of its information from the Bell System, the court would not attach so much weight to the document as it might otherwise have done. The judge also said that neither the Bell System nor any of its employees had done anything wrong in providing information which had been requested.

Contrary to what Broad says, it was not AT&T but rather the Department of Defense study which stated that breaking up the Bell System would be "lethal to national security." While we agree with that position, even the most casual reading of the document of the court transcripts would have turned up the origin of the statement.

The charge that AT&T introduced this document in "hopes of ending the massive case" is totally false. There was no intent or expectation that this or any other single piece of evidence would terminate the case.

Despite Broad's characterization, it is not at all "unusual" for any party to a lawsuit to use admissions from the opposing side. In fact, most of the government's case is admissions from AT&T in the form of documents, employee memos, minutes of meetings, tariffs, and so forth. The judge ruled many months ago that this case is the U.S. government versus AT&T and that the government includes cabinet departments, including the Department of Defense. The document in no way represented, as Broad says, "the entry of the Pentagon" into

the case. It has been in it ever since the case was filed in November 1974.

Finally, without commenting on a number of other colorful but misleading statements in the *Science* article, we do want to correct an error concerning communication satellites which has now appeared at least twice in *Science*, in the 28 August article and in an earlier article on electromagnetic pulse (News and Comment, 5 June, p. 1116).

The Bell System, which pioneered in communication satellites, currently utilizes the three Comstar satellites and has announced plans to replace those with three Telstar-III communication satellites when the current ones reach the end of their useful life. In addition, without getting into the Department of Defense's specific mix of services, Broad is totally incorrect when he states that the "Pentagon now relies on satellites for 70 percent of its long-haul communications needs."

I have read *Science* regularly for many years and generally believed its news reporting to be as fair and objective as its scientific section and in the tradition of the AAAS. It is disappointing to find such misleading reporting in this case.

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I regret that the headline attributing the "lethal" charge to AT&T was misleading. The text accurately attributes that opinion to the Department of Defense (DOD) and notes that it was the Bell System, not the Pentagon, that brought the charge into the courtroom. Because *Science* is dated a week ahead of actual publication, the article was in print before the judge handed down his ruling. An AT&T attorney at the hearing said that if the court were to rule that the DOD document represented the position of the entire government, AT&T would then move to have the suit dropped. Also, the hearing was unusual in that it took place so the judge could consider the "weight" that should be accorded the DOD document, rather than just hearing testimony.

Finally, an unclassified 1979 DOD report (*1*) says the Pentagon relies on satellites for more than 66 percent of its total

long-haul communications. Pentagon officials estimate that, since the report was written, use of satellites has increased to 70 percent.—WILLIAM J. BROAD

Reference

1. "Distributed, survivable direction and control systems for civil preparedness—concepts and initial designs" (Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, AO-AO72388, Department of Defense, 19 May 1979), pp. 4–11.

Sulfur Dioxide Emissions

In the 2 October issue (News and Comment, p. 38), an article by R. Jeffrey Smith about the National Research Council's report *Atmosphere-Biosphere Interactions: Toward a Better Understanding of the Ecological Consequences of Fossil Fuel Combustion* incorrectly attributes to the Committee on Atmosphere and Biosphere a quantitative statement on sulfur dioxide emissions. The *Science* article states: "Emissions of sulfur dioxide, one of the precursors of acid rain, should be cut by at least 50 percent, the panel says, while emissions of nitrogen oxides, another precursor, must also be sharply cut." This misstatement appears to be based on a comment in the committee's report (page 181) that points to a need for a reduction of 50 percent in deposited hydrogen ions to protect sensitive freshwater ecosystems.

While there is insufficient evidence to make a quantitative one-to-one linkage between emissions of sulfur and nitrogen oxides and the hydrogen ion concentration of rain, there is extremely strong circumstantial evidence to support the conclusion that acid rain is largely a problem of anthropogenic origin and that its solution will involve substantial reductions in emissions of oxides of sulfur and nitrogen to the atmosphere.

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Germplasm Conservation

It is heartening to see that the problems of conservation of germplasm resources are somewhat belatedly receiving scientific press coverage and federal government attention. John Walsh (News and Comment, 23 Oct., p. 421) gives a good account of current activities of a number of governmental and private