

# Letters

## Plea to the Scientific Community

A briefing in the 7 May issue of *Science* (News and Comment, p. 603) describes the Life Sciences Research Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted to identifying and supporting the highest quality young scientists to pursue ideas of their choice in the best research environments. This foundation solicits funds from industry, other foundations, and individuals to finance competitive 3-year postdoctoral fellowships. In effect, we provide an inexpensive peer review mechanism that is not usually available to these contributors. As the *Science* article points out, this attempt to convince industry to give funds without strings attached is an experiment with no guarantee of success. It is not their preferred way of giving. Hoffmann-La Roche and Monsanto are "founding sponsors." They have agreed to support two new postdoctoral fellows in 1983 and 1984 and one new one in 1985, reaching a steady state of five fellows. They have pledged to maintain this level of support if other sponsors join the program. Although the foundation's board continues to solicit actively, we recognize how much more effective our appeal could be if the scientific community as a whole brought its considerable resources to our aid. By soliciting through personal or professional contacts, scientists can help us convey to prospective donors the necessity for support of nontargeted research in the life sciences using a peer review mechanism. We welcome and need assistance. Address correspondence to Donald D. Brown, Life Sciences Research Foundation, 115 West University Parkway, Baltimore, Maryland 21210.

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## Freedom of Expression

May I draw attention to a matter that gravely compromises the free and unrestricted exchange of scientists to Britain?

Scientists from abroad who visit the research establishments of the government research councils in Britain (Agriculture Research Council, Medical Research Council, Science and Engineering Research Council, and Social Sciences Research Council) are required to sign an undertaking to accept certain conditions "in consideration of the facilities and privileges which the [relevant] Council provides and allows" (Form Y, "Notes for the guidance of visiting scientific workers").

The specific conditions laid down would appear to be reasonable and legitimate; but buried in the form of acceptance there is a "catchall" proviso [which owes inspiration to section 2 of Britain's Official Secrets Act (1)] that visiting scientists are required "during [their] visit and afterwards . . . not to mention the Council's name in any public controversy [italics mine]" (2).

May I urge concerned scientists from abroad—especially American scientists through the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility—to make known their objection to this intimidating and unwarranted limitation on their freedom of expression?

Because of severe (and often covert) disciplinary action that may be taken against them, many British (scientific) members of the government research councils "fear that if they do step out of line and 'speak out' they will not only jeopardize their present job but will find it even harder to secure another" (3).

Reprisals or retaliation of this kind are in conflict with provisions specifically respecting the freedom of expression of scientists as adopted in the human rights guidelines of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (4), the *Declaration of the Rights of Scientific Workers* (1967) by the General Assembly of the World Federation of Scientific Workers, *Recommendations on the Status of Scientific Researchers* (1974) by Unesco, and *Safeguard of the Pursuit of Science* (1976) by the International Council of

Scientific Unions, for which the Royal Society is Britain's national adhering body.

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## References and Notes

1. S. Alderson, *Nature (London)* **278**, 206 (1979); ———, *Times High. Educ. Suppl. (London)*, 9 December 1979, p. 26.
2. A crucial definition of "controversy" (according to the Oxford English Dictionary) is "debate or dispute on a matter of opinion."
3. A. Unger, *Nature (London)* **277**, 260 (1979).
4. C. Norman, *ibid.* **261**, 89 (1976).

## Lead Regulations

The article "The politics of lead" by Eliot Marshall (News and Comment, 30 Apr., p. 496) deals with the lead phase-down program of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The implication in the article—that EPA has already made up its mind to abolish controls of lead in gasoline and is merely going through the motions of rule-making—is untrue.

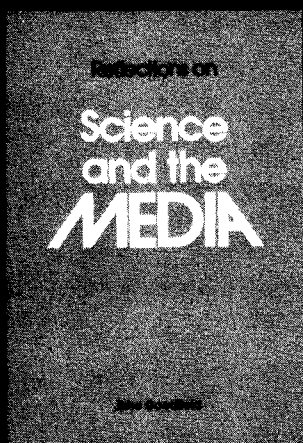
Much has been made, both in Marshall's article and at a 14 April hearing chaired by Representative Toby Moffett (D-Conn.), of a series of meetings that took place between EPA and industry representatives before EPA's February proposal. It has not been indicated, however, that EPA personnel routinely meet with *anyone* who requests a meeting on matters pending before the agency. Any members of the public who request meetings, in this case concerning the lead phase-down regulations, are obliged. No one would insist on "public observers" at all such meetings.

The comment period and hearings held on 15 and 16 April were specifically intended to solicit the views of any and all persons with a point of view to offer. We received oral testimony from nearly 90 witnesses, including more than a dozen health experts; as well as refiners, environmentalists, lead manufacturers, and concerned private citizens. We have so far received more than 100 written comments, and the comment period was open until 17 May. We are encouraging interchange and rebuttal among those supplying information and believe this has been a model of an open, thorough rule-making.

The EPA did not simply propose to rescind the regulations or any other simple regulatory alternative; the agency proposed a series of options, including maintaining the current regulatory program. The unusual approach of including

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a number of alternatives in a proposed rule indicated EPA's lack of a favored approach, and certainly the absence of a predetermined outcome. The issue before EPA is not whether lead is good or bad but whether the current regulatory approach is the most appropriate way to achieve our goal of reduced lead exposure, since in the long term continued growth in unleaded gasoline use will result in a reduction in the use of lead in gasoline.

With regard to the meeting between the administrator of EPA and representatives of the Thriftway company, Marshall does not indicate that a report of the inspector general of EPA, after an investigation requested by Representative Moffett, failed to find any wrongdoing on the part of the administrator. As established in guidelines that have been in existence since 1979 (44 Fed. Reg. 58953, 12 October 1979), one factor used to determine whether or not any penalty is appropriate for violation of the lead standard is economic hardship. My staff is evaluating the claim of economic hardship presented to the administrator, and we will treat Thriftway in accordance with our existing guidelines and appropriate enforcement procedure.

As EPA's assistant administrator in charge of this program, I can assure *Science's* readers that no decision has been made on whether changes to the lead phase-down regulations are appropriate. We plan to make a sound decision based on the record before us; we invite readers to supply any information they believe would be helpful in enabling us to reach a well-founded decision.

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## Science Instruction and Religion

In response to the letters by J. C. Hickman and R. M. Joyce (16 Apr., p. 242) concerning the teaching of evolution, I do not advocate mixing religion with science instruction or teaching the assertions of Genesis literalists. I do advocate teaching concepts of evolution in a manner that avoids unnecessary strife and misunderstanding. Most of some 40 million American Christian "fundamentalists" still take a dim, if not hostile, view of Darwinian evolution, largely because they mistakenly perceive its emphasis as anti-God. This impression can rather easily be corrected.

Judge Overton (19 Feb., p. 938) makes the essential point as follows: "The theory of evolution assumes the existence of life and is directed to an explanation of *how* life evolved. Evolution does not presuppose the absence of a creator or God. . . ." I would add that concepts of creation and evolution are quite compatible if evolution is viewed as a creative process continuing over many millions of years. Individual writers or lecturers could, of course, say much more about divergent beliefs or theories concerning origins, depending on the audience. The integrity of science is not compromised by stating that the *ultimate* origins of matter and life are unknown and open to conjecture. Indeed, evolutionary scientists, among whom I count myself, could well take greater care in separating facts from conjecture.

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## Journal Prices

James E. Heath (Letters, 14 May, p. 684) raises several important points regarding the cost of new journals; however, the problem of the cost of journals to institutional libraries applies equally to established journals. The majority of research journals (old and new) impose higher subscription rates to libraries than to individuals. Publishers seem to forget that their relationships with libraries are symbiotic. The researcher/scholar requires the collections and services of libraries in order to research a topic, produce a paper, and provide the publisher with publishable material. Why then do publishers seek to punish that which provides them with their income?

As journal prices escalate, libraries are forced to cancel more and more subscriptions, thus providing poorer collections for the scholar. Although the library market accounts for only a small income, without this reliable base income publishers cannot exist. Witness the demise of many secondary publications and publishers, and falling circulations. Increasing prices without an equivalent increase in quantity or quality is not the answer.

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