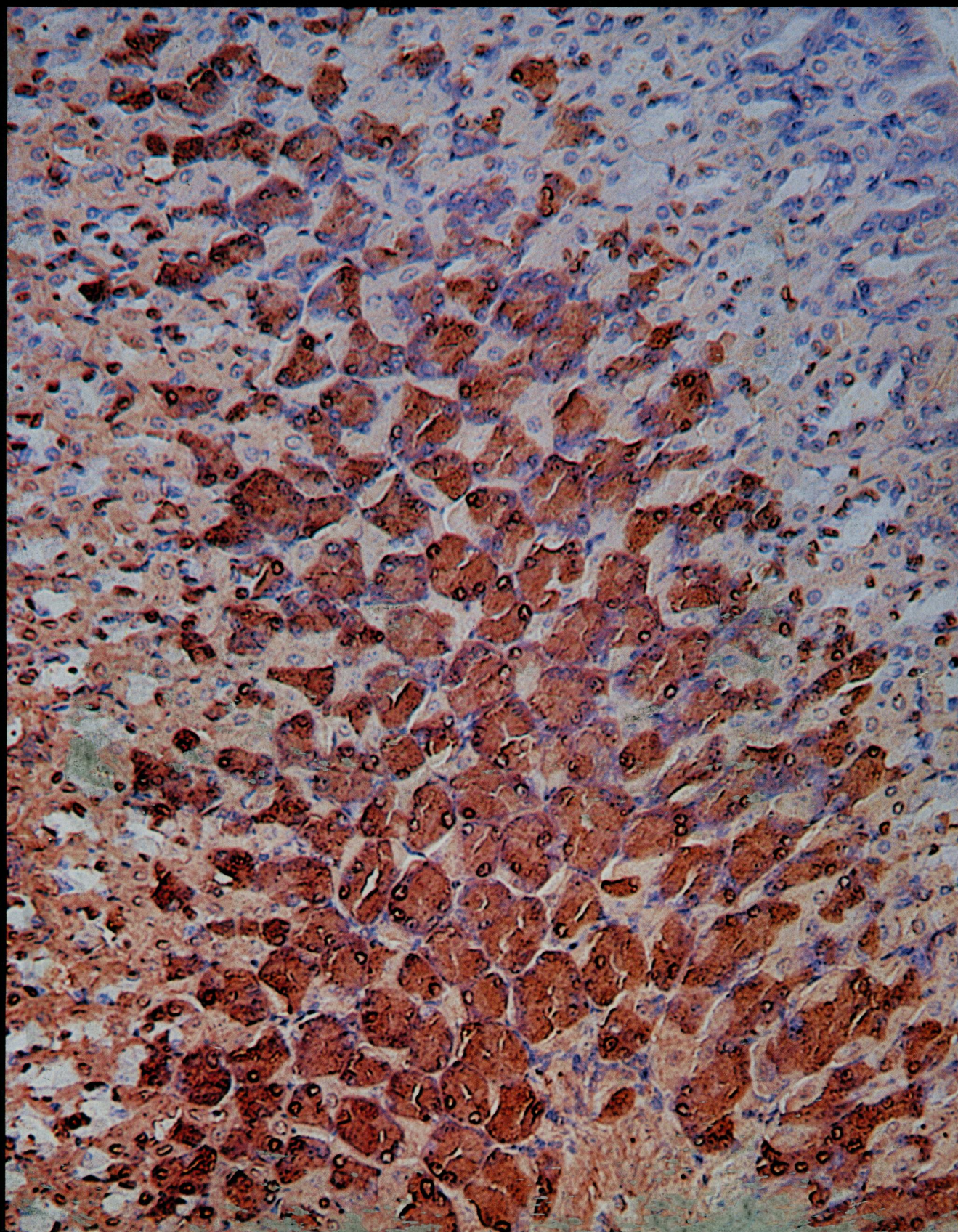


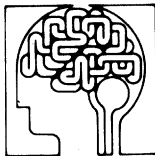
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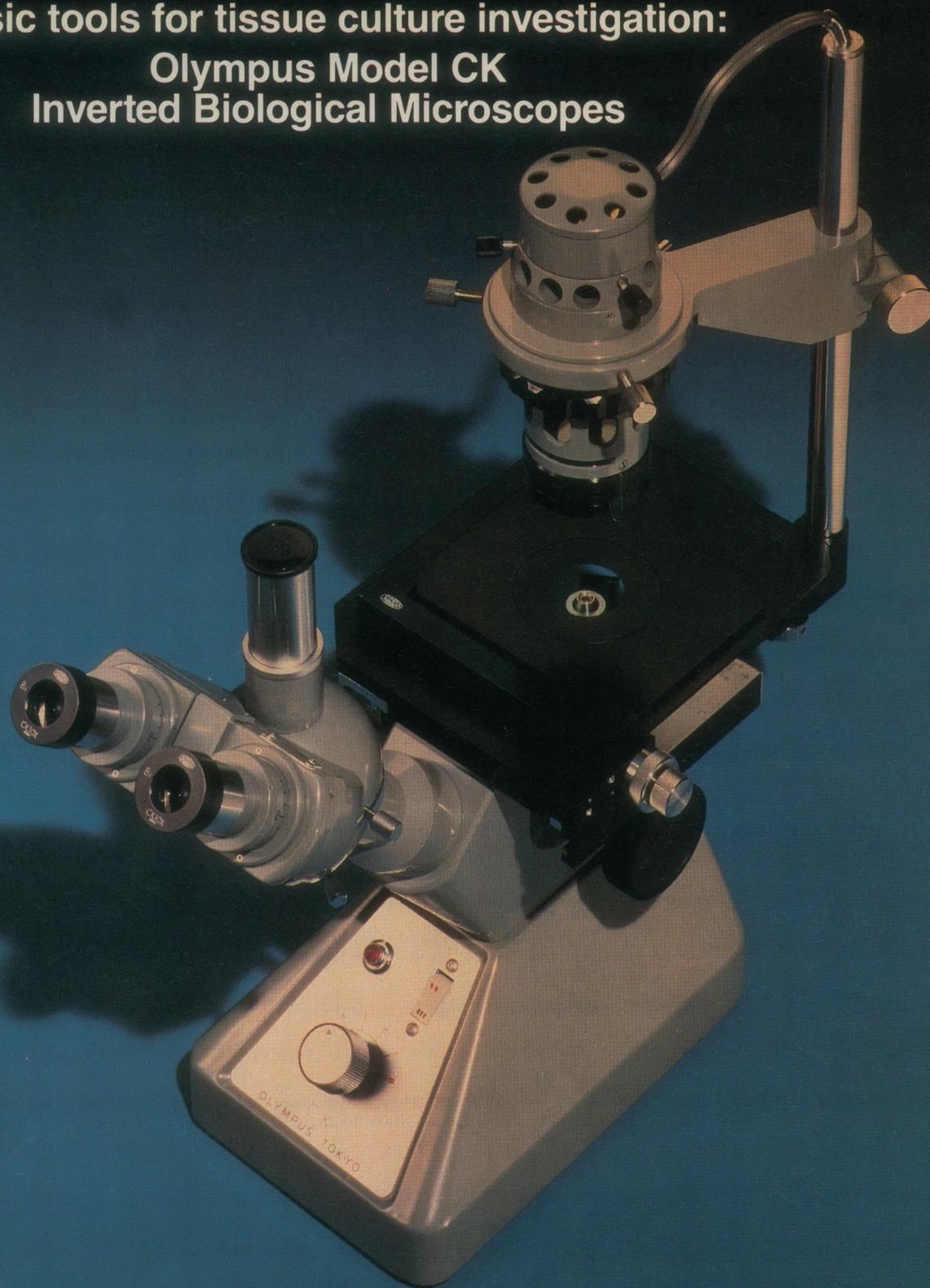
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<b>LETTERS</b>	Weather Satellites and Climate Research: <i>J. A. Coakley, Jr.</i> ; Nuclear Plant Performance: <i>C. Komanoff</i> ; Cancer Chemotherapy: <i>J. Cairns</i> and <i>P. Boyle</i> ; <i>E. Frei III</i> .....	252
<b>EDITORIAL</b>	1984: Science's Multicolored Coat .....	259
<b>ARTICLES</b>	Expert Systems Research: <i>R. O. Duda</i> and <i>E. H. Shortliffe</i> .....	261
	Neural Crest and the Origin of Vertebrates: A New Head: <i>C. Gans</i> and <i>R. G. Northcutt</i> .....	268
	The "Decade of the Environment" in the U.S.S.R.: <i>P. R. Pryde</i> .....	274
<b>NEWS AND COMMENT</b>	The Salem Case: A Failure of Nuclear Logic.....	280
	Downsizing at the University of Michigan .....	283
	NAE Elects New Members .....	285
	<i>Briefing</i> : National Science Board Okays Theory Center; Soviets Reject Test Ban Changes; Financially, AMA Heals Itself; Cornell, Three Companies Plight Biotech Troth; Texas A & M to Direct Deep-Sea Drilling .	286
<b>RESEARCH NEWS</b>	A Lunar Meteorite and Maybe Some from Mars.....	288
	New Clue to the Cause of Toxic Shock.....	290
	Clues to Cell Growth and Differentiation .....	291
	<i>ACS Highlights</i> : Interferon Activity Without the Interferon; New Agents Active Against Herpesviruses; New Drugs from Plant Tissue Cultures; How Many Chemicals Are There?.....	292
	Control Element Found Within Structural Gene .....	294
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	Food Webs, reviewed by <i>R. M. May</i> ; Physiology and Biology of Horseshoe Crabs, <i>J. Atema</i> ; Cyclic and Event Stratification, <i>H. R. Wanless</i> ; Ferns and Allied	

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<b>REPORTS</b>	Volcanic Ash over Arizona in the Spring of 1982: Astronomical Observations: W. Livingston and G. W. Lockwood .....	300
	Potential Role of Galactokinase in Neonatal Carbohydrate Assimilation: R. M. Kliegman, E. L. Miettinen, S. Morton.....	302
	Virus-Induced Autoimmunity: Monoclonal Antibodies That React with Endocrine Tissues: M. V. Haspel et al. ....	304
	Biologically Active Chorionic Gonadotropin: Synthesis by the Human Fetus: W. G. McGregor, R. W. Kuhn, R. B. Jaffe .....	306
	Mobilization of Cellular Calcium-45 and Lead-210: Effect of Physiological Stimuli: J. G. Pounds and R. A. Mittelstaedt .....	308
	<i>Enchenopa binotata</i> Complex: Sympatric Speciation?: T. K. Wood and S. I. Guttman .....	310
	Breathing Gas Mixtures Different from Air: An Adaptation for Survival Under the Ice of a Facultative Air-Breathing Fish: J. J. Magnuson et al. ....	312
	Irreversible Ligands with High Selectivity Toward $\delta$ or $\mu$ Opiate Receptors: K. C. Rice et al. ....	314
	Toxic Shock Syndrome and Lysogeny in <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> : S. E. Schutzer, V. A. Fischetti, J. B. Zabriskie .....	316
	Human Leukocyte Functions and the U.S. Safety Standard for Exposure to Radio-Frequency Radiation: N. J. Roberts, Jr., S.-T. Lu, S. M. Michaelson.....	318
	Sodium Currents in Segments of Human Heart Cells: J. O. Bustamante and T. F. McDonald .....	320
	Natural Distribution of the <i>Ixodes dammini</i> Spirochete: E. M. Bosler et al. ....	321
	Systemic Cholinergic Agents Induce Seizures and Brain Damage in Lithium-Treated Rats: M. P. Honchar, J. W. Olney, W. R. Sherman .....	323
	Digoxin-Inactivating Bacteria: Identification in Human Gut Flora: J. F. Dobkin et al. ....	325
	Visual Sustained Attention: Image Degradation Produces Rapid Sensitivity Decrement Over Time: K. H. Nuechterlein, R. Parasuraman, Q. Jiang .....	327
	Altered Activity in the Hippocampus Is More Detrimental to Classical Conditioning Than Removing the Structure: P. R. Solomon et al. ....	329
	Alcohol-Induced Spasms of Cerebral Blood Vessels: Relation to Cerebrovascular Accidents and Sudden Death: B. M. Altura, B. T. Altura, A. Gebrewold .....	331
	Drug History Modifies the Behavioral Effects of Pentobarbital: J. R. Glowa and J. E. Barrett.....	333
	Defense in Thrips: Forbidding Fruitiness of a Lactone: D. F. Howard, M. S. Blum, H. M. Fales .....	335
	Technical Comment: Retraction of Data on the Human c-ras <sub>1</sub> <sup>H</sup> Oncogene: R. J. Muschel et al. ....	336

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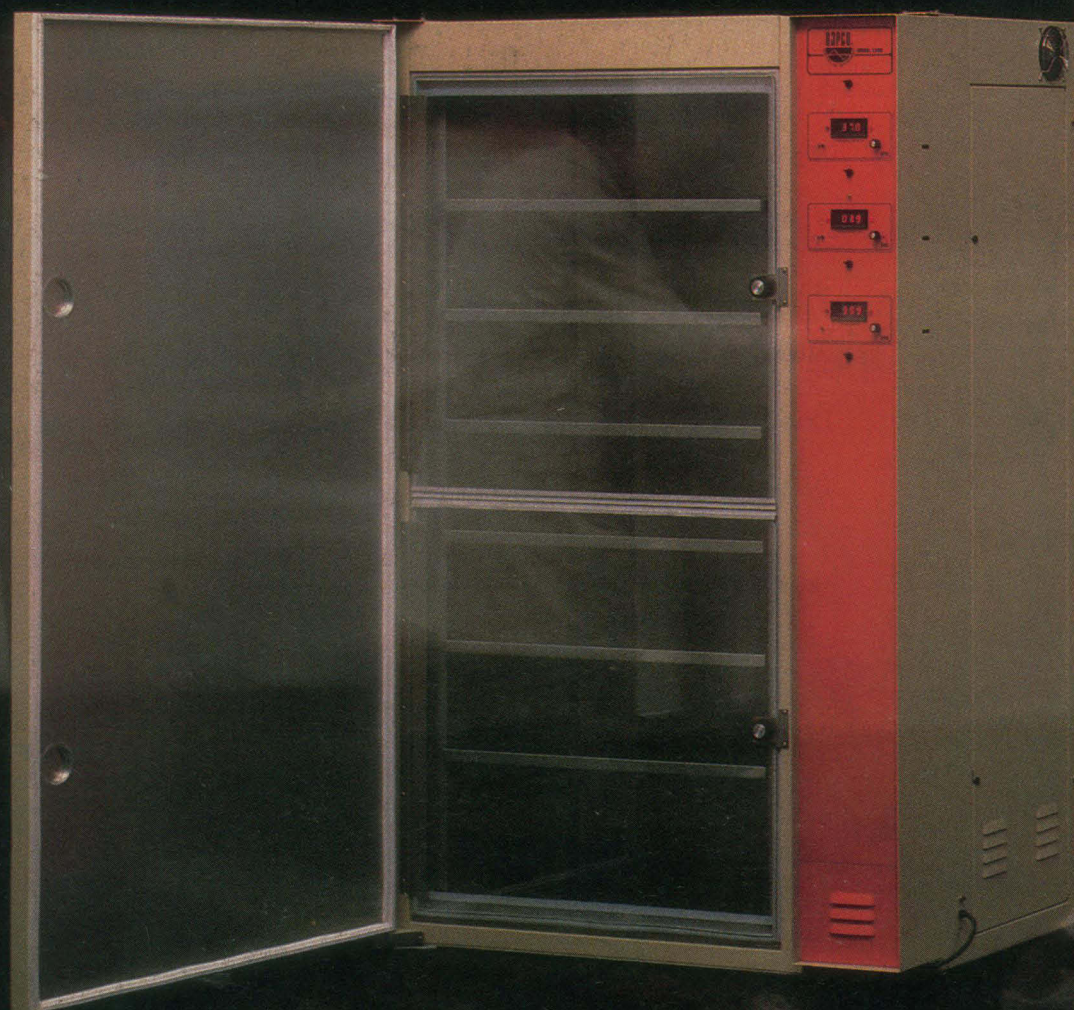
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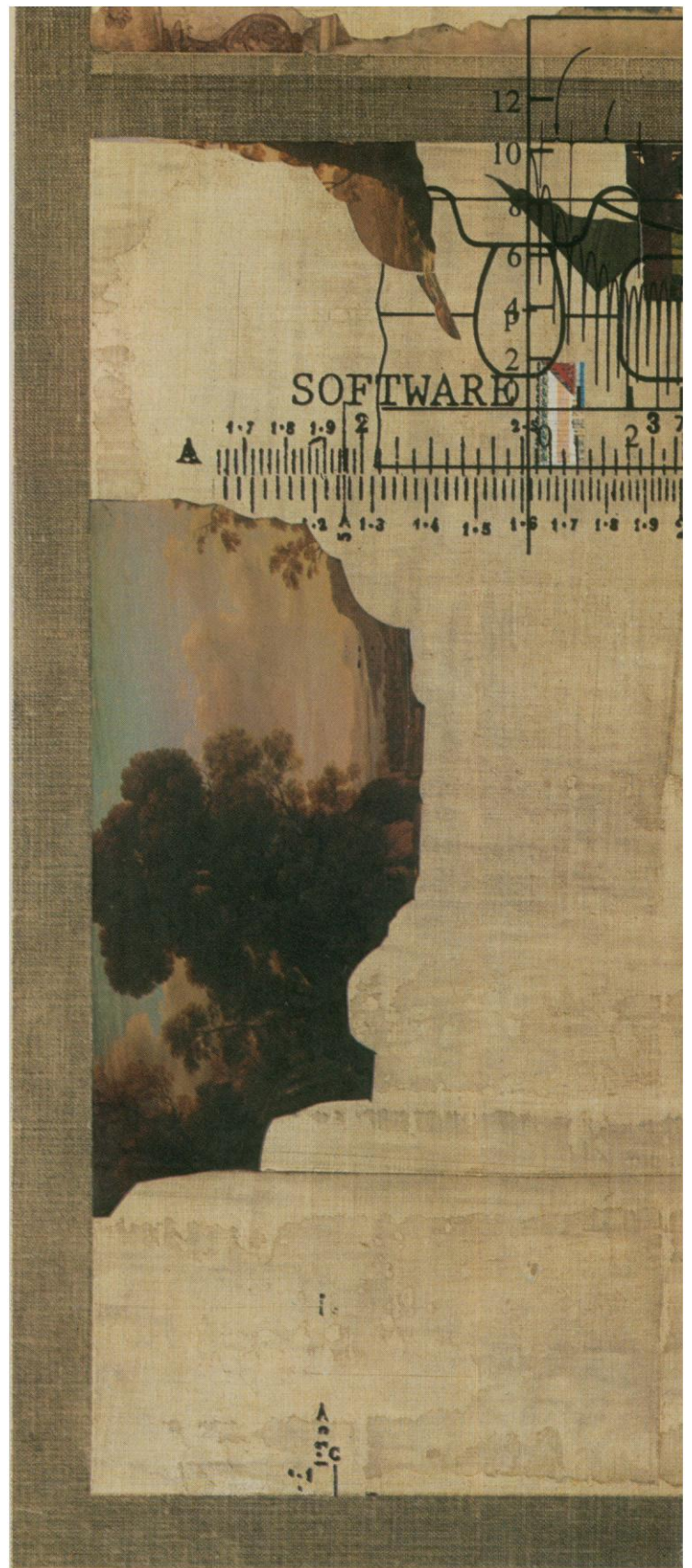
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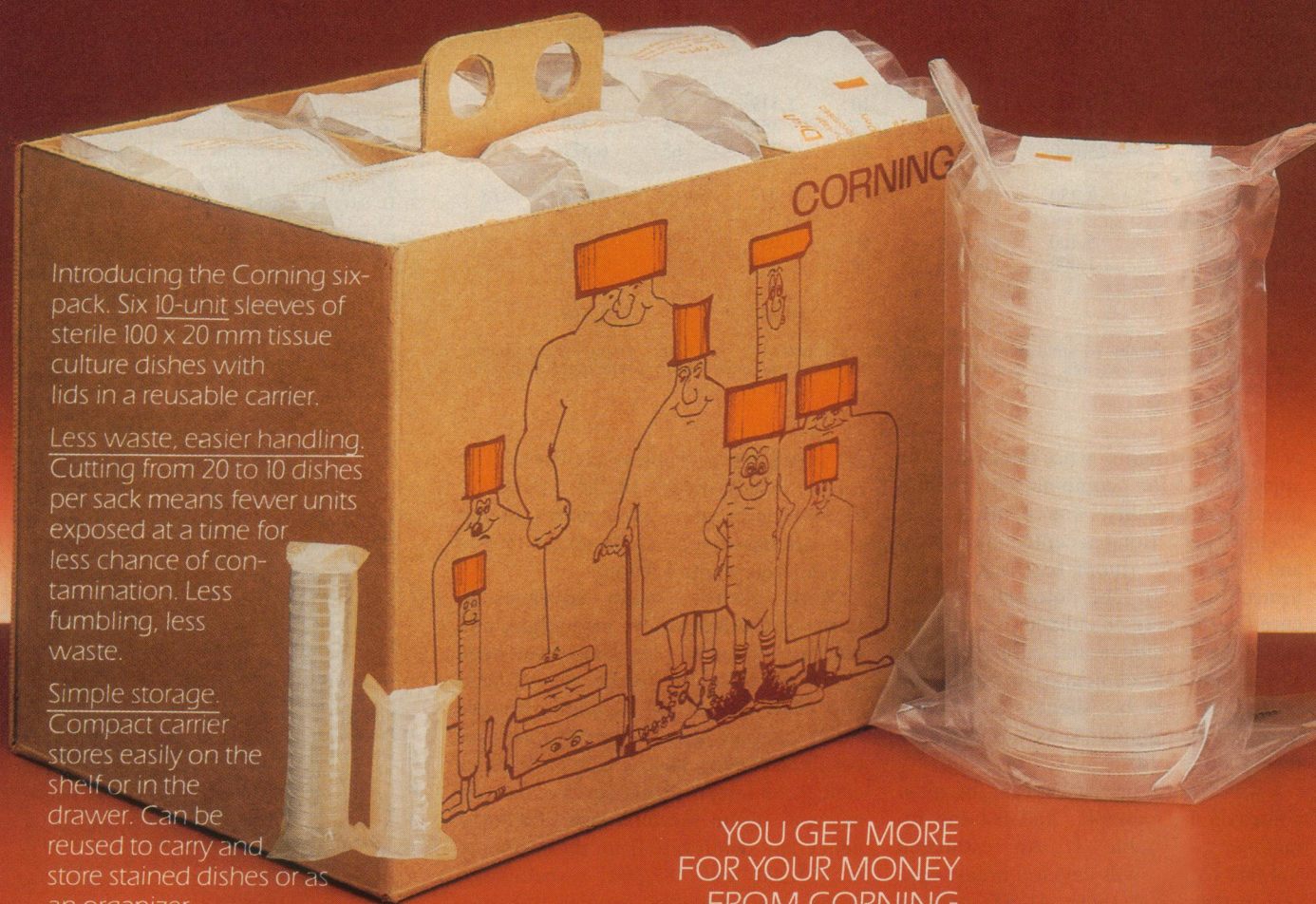
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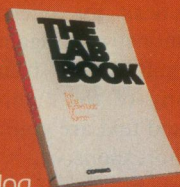
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# 1984: Science's Multicolored Coat

At the AAAS Colloquium on R & D Policy on 24 and 25 March, before a record attendance, President Reagan's 1984 budget proposals for research and development were searched diligently for meanings and long-range import. There could be no doubt that the budget for science had been crafted with care and deliberation by its architects in government. Nor could there be any mistaking the centrality of research and development in the Administration's economic and defense strategies. But what was striking about this colloquium was its sobriety, the reflectiveness with which the participants took the news about growth and priorities, and the absence of hubris.

The explanation lies in the magnitude of the expectations implicit in the government's assumptions and dispositions, in the conspicuous roles assigned to research and development for regenerating industrial growth, and in the preemptive priority accorded to weapons research and development. By coincidence, the colloquium was in progress when the President chose the medium of television to summon the full talents of scientists to an antimissile race with the Soviets, a risky and possibly fateful mobilization of competitive science and technology of prolonged duration. No wonder, then, that this colloquium had its hands full.

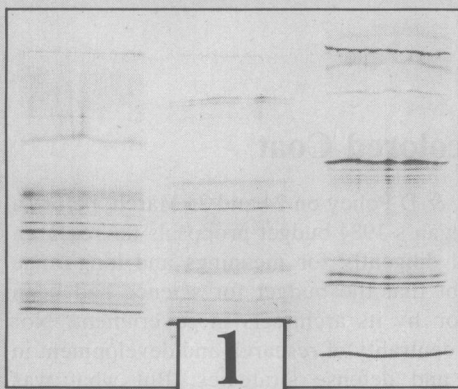
Meanwhile, at the other end of town the House was overriding the Administration's spending targets by voting a budget resolution that fattened the research and development totals for civil functions while decreasing amounts for defense. Moreover, Congress showed that it was in a mood to cure all the ills of science and engineering education with a huge injection of federal appropriations, whether or not the nation's educational system had its act together. With such blessings from both the executive and legislative heavens arriving in profusion after years of dwindling rations, scientists and educators alike could be pardoned for pinching themselves.

Political gusto aside, the budget itself stood out as a remarkable performance in policy-making by the Administration. In the face of appalling fiscal problems with worse still to come, science and technology not only were spared the pain of the freeze on nondefense spending but emerged with a major increase for basic science and an overall hike in the totals for research and development, even if the latter is defense-driven. It is a robust budget, one with both internal and external logic, and in the current climate it stands an excellent chance of surviving the fiscal wars.

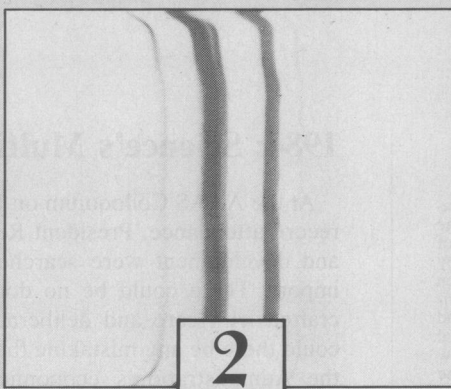
Still, preferential treatment places research and development in the uneasy position of being hostage to political expectations. The 1984 budget is not an unconditional gift. It is moored to an intricate public policy which favors certain areas of basic science at the expense of others, which seeks to enhance military assets while at once inducing economic resurgence and overtaking our world competitors, which seeks to rehabilitate science education and stimulate job creation, and yet aches to block channels of scientific communication and technology transfer. When government is out to do all these things at the same time it is not merely taking on a tall order but it is enmeshing the scientific and engineering communities in the toils of political accountability to a degree that we have not previously experienced. The point is only sharpened by the resurrected controversy involving an antimissile defense commitment.

Might this budget have been shaped with more altruism, more hope for a downbeat world? Might it have spoken more generously to the conscience of science? On these scores there is still much to be said. But it is in the nature of things that the budget reflects the country's times and troubles, cast in the construct of an Administration's political values. Though science has emerged a certified winner in the Administration's budgetary struggles, the matter does not end there. What bears thinking about is the escalating instrumental function of the sciences in the business of the state, and what, in the long run, may come of it.—WILLIAM D. CAREY

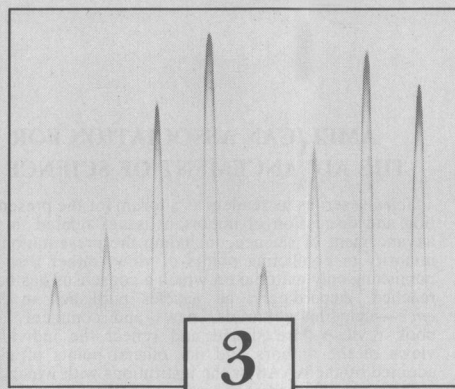
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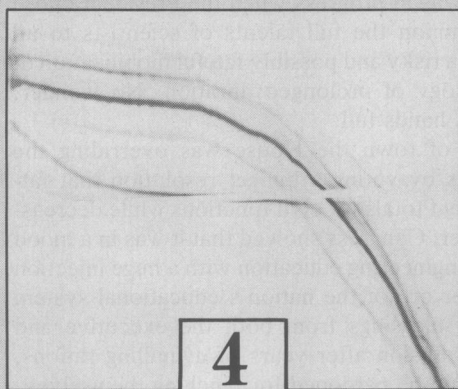
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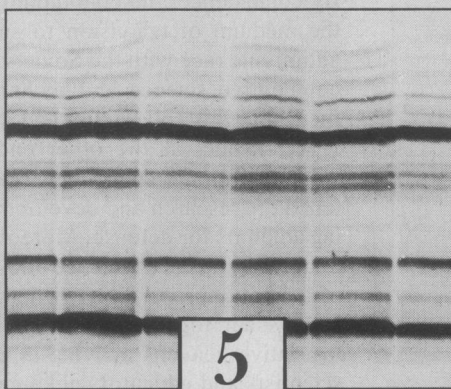
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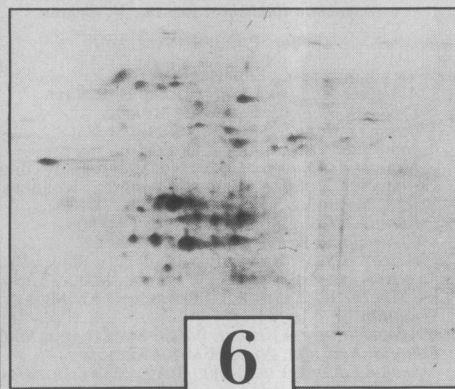
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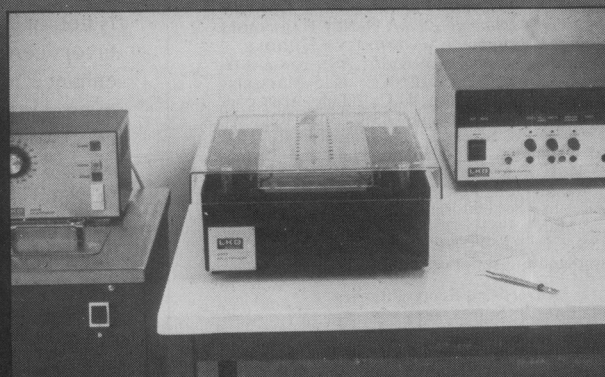
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