Within the Community of Scientists

Why have black scientists, engineers, and health professionals formed black associations? What is the nature of black scientists' participation in "mainstream" science organizations and what do they expect from these groups? These questions were the focus of discussion at a Black History Month program at the AAAS where black scientists and physicians shared their perceptions on the role of "separate" and "mainstream" associations in the careers and lives of black science professionals.

Generally, black professional associations are either over 40 years old or were formed about 15 years ago during the civil rights movement of the late 1960's. The older associations came about because of segregation, separation of races, and discrimination against blacks that prevented their full participation in the affairs of society—such as being unable to attend scientific meetings at hotels which barred blacks, or being denied membership in local medical associations.

The newer black scientific associations reflect the special concerns of black scientists and engineers today. In most cases, their formation did not result in a schism with blacks going off to their own groups but in an awareness that different groups have different priorities.

W. Montague Cobb, distinguished professor emeritus at Howard University, talked about the conditions which led to the establishment and continuation of the 89 year-old National Medical Association (NMA). He described how the black perspective in medical research and practice led to early NMA support for national health insurance, for increased numbers of black physicians, and for heightened attention to the diseases which impact the health status of black Americans. These stands have often been at open variance with those of the mainstream medical establishment.

Alicia E. Hastings, professor and chair, Department of Physical Medicine, Howard University, is in the minority in her field, both as a woman and as a black physician. She told the audience about her participation in mainstream organizations and what she gets from and gives to these groups. Hastings belongs to the NMA as well as to the American Medical Association and the mainstream societies of her specialty. For many people like Hastings, the issue is not which group to join but how to manage the multiple memberships made necessary by the limitations in scope of each group—to meet the needs of the professional self *and* the black professional self.

William Jackson, professor of chemistry at Howard University, related the history of the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. He also characterized his expectations of mainstream associations.

"They can be advocates for certain points of view. But most of the time those organizations do not address themselves to issues that are of *particular* concern to blacks. The other part of the issue, Jackson said, is what the organization itself is doing about the underrepresentation of large segments of the population in a given field. His view is that "In any profession that has an underrepresentation of a significant number of people . . . something is wrong. Something is wrong with that profession. . . . We do not know what kind of talent we are missing . . . and the professional society ought to address that problem."

Alvin Goins, retired chief of personality and cognition research, National Institute of Mental Health, discussed the formation of the Black Association of Psychologists. He noted that unlike chemistry and physics, where one might argue a certain isolation of subject matter from racial/ethnic considerations, the very fabric of psychology—curriculum, research questions, methodology, and clinical practice—is inseparable from

Black Engineers

The first automatic lubricator, gas masks first used by firemen, a revolutionary refining process for sugar, advanced electric trolley cars, and carbon filaments and threaded sockets for light bulbs all are technological contributions made by black engineers.

At a luncheon seminar during Black History Month, Carol Morning, vice president for research, National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), detailed the evolution of the "minorities in engineering" effort from an assortment of effective but narrowly focused national projects and advisory groups linked by associations of project leaders and NACME. NACME and its predecessors have provided career information to students who knew nothing about engineering, distributed scholarship funds contributed by corporations and foundations, identified for college recruitment students with promise in engineering, and offered a wide range of academic enrichment programs to high school and college students.

Theodore Habarth, president and chair of the board of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering (GEM) discussed the role of GEM in encouraging and financially supporting graduate engineering work for minority students. GEM, a consortium of corporations and universities, is the third component of the intervention effort which includes precollege and college level programs.

Citing projections of increasing engineering manpower needs and an increasing proportion of minority groups in the U.S. school age population, speakers urged action to make the most of existing programs and to increase private and governmental support for such efforts at precollege, college, and graduate levels.

such considerations in much of the discipline. Goins argued that the mainstream psychology associations were "trapped by their own mission statements" into dealing with concerns raised by black professionals.

The small number of black scientists in many fields and at most work sites have led to the formation of other kinds of groups. The American Association of Blacks in Energy, which tries to affect national energy policy, and the Network of Minority Women in Science, which emphasizes precollege science education, are examples of such organizations.

The Office of Opportunities in Science has identified some 40 organizations of minority scientists, engineers, and health professionals. Similarly, separate groups of women and disabled scientists and engineers exist. Since membership means a commitment of money and/or time, scientists from these underrepresented groups make conscious choices about what they will join and what they expect from these different associations.

The message is clear—for individual scientists, what they care about will affect their decision to join and work within an association; and for any association the needs of the times must affect its mission. For example, the current crisis in precollege science and mathematics education has led to broad concern among most of the scientific and engineering societies. But, will associations see past their own reflections to the majority of the population (women, minorities, and disabled persons) when looking at the available pool of talent—to the future doers of science and producers of technology?

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Office of Opportunities in Science

Evolution/Creation Book Published

The AAAS Pacific Division has just published *Evolutionists Confront Creationists*.

The book is unusual for including two papers by creationists, one an overview by Duane Gish (Institute for Creation Research), and the other on radioactive haloes and red shifts by Robert Gentry (Columbia Union College).

Evolution science is detailed by Patrick Abbott (San Diego State University, on stratigraphy), Joel Cracraft (University of Illinois, Chicago, on systematics), G. Brent Dalrymple (U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, on the age of the earth), Russell Doolittle (University of California, San Diego, on the origin of life), John Patterson (Iowa State University, on thermodynamics), Robert Root-Bernstein (Salk Institute, on philosophical issues), and William Thwaites (San Diego State University, on the design argument).

The 200-page softcover book may be purchased at $9.75 per copy plus $1.50 postage per order (prepaid orders only; make checks payable to California Academy of Sciences; California residents add tax to price of books) from the AAAS Pacific Division, c/o California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California 94118.

Amendment to AAAS Constitution

Article II, Objectives, of the AAAS Constitution reads as follows: "The objectives of the American Association for the Advancement of Science are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to foster scientific freedom and responsibility, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress."

In order to bring this Article up to date and, in particular, to recognize that science and engineering are moving closer together at a rapid rate and to provide an environment that will facilitate that trend, the AAAS Board of Directors proposes amending it as follows:

"The objectives of the American Association for the Advancement of Science are to further the work of scientists and engineers; to facilitate cooperation among them; to foster freedom, creativity, and responsibility in the pursuit of science and its applications; to improve the effectiveness of science and engineering in advancing human welfare; to promote quality and opportunity in science, mathematics, and engineering education; to increase public knowledge and understanding of science and its applications in human progress; and to contribute to the formulation of appropriate and effective public and private policies for the advancement of science and engineering."

This notice is published in accordance with Constitution Article IX, which calls for publication of proposed amendments at least 30 days in advance of the Council meeting at which they are to be presented. If a majority of Council members so votes at the meeting on 28 May, the above amendment will be submitted to the AAAS membership for ratification by mail at the time of the 1984 election. A favorable vote by two-thirds of the members who return ballots is required for adoption.

Interciencia Begins Network of Biotechnology in the Americas

The Interciencia Association (IA) established a new program activity with the creation of a Continuing Committee for Networking in Biotechnology during the annual meeting of the IA Council last October at Caracas, Venezuela.

The Continuing Committee grew out of the extremely successful symposium "Biotechnology in the Americas: Prospects for Developing Countries," held at San Jose, Costa Rica, in May 1983. The symposium, which brought together 42 scientists and engineers from ten countries, was sponsored by IA together with the Central American Industrial Research Council of Costa Rica (CONICIT). The proceedings of the symposium and workshop were published by IA.

Already a number of activities have been set in motion in Latin America to implement recommendations made at the symposium, and still others are beginning. Among the activities suggested for Interciencia are an inventory of biotechnology researchers in the Latin American and Caribbean countries; development of a newsletter or other mechanism for rapid exchange of information; developing consensus panels to help establish national and regional priorities; coordination of training programs; organizing future workshops; and initiation of, or close relations with, a biotechnology network for the developing American nations.

The Interciencia Continuing Committee will examine which of such proposals IA could contribute to most effectively.

Rodrigo Zeledon of Costa Rica has been named chairman of the Continuing Committee for Networks in Biotechnology (NBT). Zeledon, a well-known biologist, is professor at the University of Costa Rica and president of Costa Rica's National Research Council. The staff of CONICIT, which is one of the nine member organizations of IA, will assist in coordination of NBT activities.