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BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE: Area Code 202. Membership and Subscriptions: 467-4417.

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Science Finds Its Voice

The 150th national meeting of the AAAS (24 to 29 May) set out to do what comes naturally for a large organization that exists to advance science. It showcased the scientific disciplines, crisscrossed fields of science, and converged international perspectives on the prospects for discovery and application of knowledge. It mingled the gray eminences of science with the lesser known and the often overlooked and tumbled with practiced agility through the hoops of policy controversy. The sole throwback to the years of polarization and internal divisions was provided, almost unseen, by a lunch-hour demonstration on behalf of animal welfare.

The annual meeting is the venue for convocations of the AAAS Council, which is the ultimate governing body. It is at council meetings that officers become accountable, and it is in this parliamentary setting that the AAAS speaks, as it were, *urbi et orbi*, through resolutions presented and adopted. Although such proclamations are of indeterminate effect, taken as such they serve to put the AAAS on record and to reinforce subsequent initiatives of material significance to the concerns of the members.

It is of more than passing interest that all four of the resolutions adopted at the 1984 meeting of the council bore on the theme of freedom with responsibility. The first resolution, presented by the Medical Scientists Committee of the National Institutes of Health, drew attention to the targeting of scientists for harassment or repression of their work and called on the AAAS to reaffirm its commitment to the fundamental rights of scientists. A second resolution, presented by the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, took up the issue of openness in science and technology against an emerging background of overt and subtle pressures on institutions and firms and urged affiliated societies and academic centers to examine their policies and restate their adherence to freedom of inquiry and expression. A third resolution, sponsored by the same committee, focused on the general dangers to science and national security inherent in governmental thrusts toward restriction of communication and publication of unclassified research. A final resolution came to the defense of the scientific and human rights of Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonner, calling upon the Soviet government to end their present isolation and urging affiliates and individual members to register their concerns with the Soviet authorities.

Although George Orwell was never mentioned as these resolutions were brought up, discussed, and voted on, there is significance to the council's concentration on the state of scientific freedom and human rights in 1984 to the exclusion of other matters that absorbed crowded sessions in New York, notably those on the risks of nuclear arms. The potential violence from nuclear warfare, tangible and quantifiable, which has been the subject of repeated resolutions at prior council meetings, gave place to concern for actual and demonstrable violence to individuals and for outspoken resistance to imposed limits on open communication of unclassified research. The four resolutions show a remarkable unity of substance and thrust, and they say a great deal about the contradictions of the times: exuberance in the pursuit of discovery and knowledge, science and scientists as trustees of the human instinct for inquiry and truth, the dilemmas in the relation of political power to the ungovernable dynamics of free scholarship, and the enforceability of guarantees of individual freedoms under laws and conventions.

In a greening public park near the White House there has long been a sculpture bearing the legend, "And freedom shrieked as Kosciuszko fell." Lest its meaning decay, it is well that science find its voice.

—WILLIAM D. CAREY