LETTERS

Acid Rain Report

Marjorie Sun's briefing on the White House Panel's Acid Rain Report (News and Comment, 21 Sept. p. 1374) indirectly quotes panel member Kenneth Rahn as saying that the panel report called for a 25 percent reduction in acid deposition. Sun describes the report as concluding that a "25 percent reduction would protect almost all aquatic life."

As a member of the panel, I disagree. Our report (p. II-2) simply states that, "[i]f the figures that *Work Group 1* agreed on are used," a 25 percent reduction (to a target loading of *sulfates* of 30 kilograms per hectare per year) "would serve to eliminate damage to all but the most delicate of fresh-water biological ecosystems" (emphases added).

However, our panel was set up in order to peer-review the output of the joint U.S.–Canadian work groups. Our own conclusion (on p. II-1) is rather different: "We know that it is not possible at this time to establish a precise loading below which the average sensitive aquatic system will be protected."

One should note also that the word "loading" means "deposition" and cannot yet be related in a precise way to the *emission* of pollutants. Our report does not support a linear relation between deposition and emission and thus should not be used to draw any conclusions about numerical levels of emissions reductions.

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Federal R&D Policy

Although I am in agreement with most of Roland W. Schmitt's comments in his article "National R&D policy: An industrial perspective" (15 June, p. 1206), some of the points concerning the national laboratories deserve additional discussion. There is no question about the need to ensure and strengthen the health of our university system. The nation's most precious resource is its brainpower. Without the basic research and training capabilities of a first-rate academic system, that resource cannot be maintained or replicate itself for future generations' needs. There is also no question about the federal role in support of that system.

With regard to the commercial R&D area, where an efficient technology