

## Letters

### Administration of Research

Never have I seen so sad, and so ominous, a juxtaposition of views as in the issue of 25 April, in which the editorial "A time for steadiness" by Provost Cornelius J. Pings of the University of Southern California (p. 437) is followed by a letter from Professor Joseph Arditti of the University of California, Irvine (p. 439).

The Provost—who happens also to be a distinguished scientist—calls attention to the effort of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) "unilaterally, and fundamentally" to change the rules of partnership between government and the universities, a relationship that has been the main source of preeminence of American science. His argument and his plea are themselves examples of the "steadiness" which is referred to in the editorial's title.

Were one to stop at the editorial page, one might conclude that Pings speaks for the universities. But on the next page of text is Arditti's letter. To be sure he speaks for himself; but for those who must, by the bad luck of employment, be close to administration and research, it has a familiar ring. It has the sound of many, perhaps even a majority of, university scientists. Freely but accurately translated, Arditti's letter encourages government to proceed as announced: to make new and Draconian rules for funding the indirect cost of research. He depicts science administration in the universities as shot through with misfeasance, with bureaucrats fattening upon "inflated salaries." He implies that administration is parasitic upon working scientists who must bring in the cash in order to survive. He goes further: encouraging OMB to proceed by fiat, he urges new rules and enhanced scrutiny in order to prevent the universities from collecting unearned tribute "under other guises."

As between these two points of view there

is no possible accommodation, yet they co-exist throughout the system of academic research. Pings does not, therefore, speak for the system. Neither, perhaps, does Arditti, but his speech is heard more often on the campus.

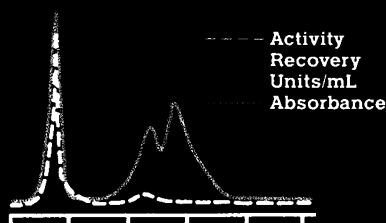
The problem is that, while some academic administrators—certainly not all—are or were serious scholars and understand the complexities of research, very few full-time scholars know anything about the finances and management of the institutions they work in. That situation (which I see little hope of rectifying, given what else faculty have to do merely to stay current as investigators) is the basis of a deplorable new alliance of government accountants with university faculty. It should be receiving urgent attention within the universities from that handful of administrators and professors who know something of both worlds.

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