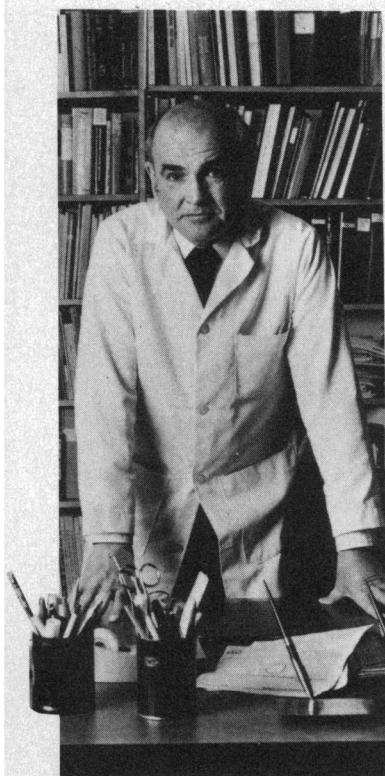


## Random Samples:



### American Nobelist Heads to Oxford

It's a case of brain drain in reverse. American cancer researcher Baruch S. Blumberg has been appointed master of Balliol College, Oxford, beginning October 1989. Blumberg is the first American to head the 725-year-old college, and one of only four American heads of college at Oxford.

Blumberg received his M.D. from Columbia University in 1951 and his doctorate in microbiology at Balliol in 1957. He also spent the 1983-84 academic year as the George Eastman Visiting Professor at Balliol. In 1976 he shared the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for his role in identifying the Australian antigen in human blood and its association with serum hepatitis. Currently vice president for population oncology at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, Blumberg says he hopes to find time and lab space at Oxford to continue his

work, and will keep a hand in his current project at Fox Chase—working with hepatitis virus and the relation between hepatitis and AIDS.

Although known more for the statesmen it has graduated, Balliol has "a fairly strong science program," Blumberg says, with perhaps 30 to 40% of its students enrolled in a science curriculum. Balliol masters are appointed by the fellows of the college and serve until the mandatory retirement age of 67. The 62-year-old Blumberg succeeds the retiring A. J. P. Kenny, a prominent medieval philosopher.

### Dr. President

Scientists the world over sometimes grumble that the people in political power simply don't understand them and their needs. (Admit it. You've heard a grumble or two.) In the United States, Fermilab chief Leon Lederman has even proposed a \$10-million war chest to fund scientists with an urge to run for public office.

If Hungarian scientists have a complaint, they now must blame one of their own. Two months ago one of the nation's most prominent biochemists, Bruno F. Straub, was elected as the new head of state, becoming one of the few scientists to ever head a government. (Chaim Weizmann, the Russian-born chemist who became Israel's first president, is another example.)

The position is largely honorary, but is symbolically important. Straub's election is seen in Budapest as a sign of the importance the government attaches to the role of basic research in stimulating long-term economic growth.

As a scientist, the 74-year-old Straub is best known for his work in the late 1940s on the ATP content of actin. He has since gained an equal reputation as a science administrator, in particular for championing the cause (and subsequently becoming the first director) of the

Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Biological Research Center at Szeged. Straub helped turn the Szeged research center into one of the most widely respected research institutes in Eastern Europe. "It was my conviction that to have good science in Eastern Europe, you had to have a research institution of critical size," he says. "I said that the critical size was about 150 scientists, and this has worked out very well."

Similarly, Straub, who is the first socialist-bloc head of state not to be a member of the Communist Party, says that it is necessary for Hungary to look outside its borders—particularly to Western Europe—if it wants to exploit its basic research results. "It is ridiculous for a country of 10 million people to expect to build up its own biotechnology industry" he says. "One of our great problems is that the venture capital is missing," he adds, pointing to recent government efforts to stimulate joint ventures with Western companies as one attempt to overcome such difficulties.

### Sufferin' Sushi! My Dinner's Moving!

Next time you get a yen for sushi, remember this cautionary tale.



A woman cooked three portions of fresh haddock in her new microwave oven. She and her son then ate two portions

and left the third filet to cool on the table. It began moving. They extracted from the fish a number of wormlike creatures measuring 35 to 40 millimeters long and 1.5 millimeters in diameter and took them to the pathology department of their local hospital.

The pathologists identified the "worms" as the larvae of *Anisakis*, a nasty nematode that infests sea-dwelling creatures in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. No one's yet developed a foolproof method of spotting infested fish. The physicians from the Reading Hospital and Medical Center reported in *JAMA* (15 July, p. 340) that the microwave apparently didn't heat the raw fish long enough to kill the nematodes.

While neither diner became ill (symptoms can include diarrhea and intestinal cramping), the authors later heard from a fellow physician who contracted trichinosis from eating pork sausages that had been cooked in a microwave. It seems that special care is needed in microwaving foods that potentially harbor disease-causing organisms. Similarly, the sushi craze is exposing increasing numbers of diners to the risk of infestation, the authors say.

The morals of the story? Make sure you microwave food long enough to kill off disease-causing organisms (at least

60°C for 5 minutes). Don't patronize cut-rate sushi parlors.

And keep an eye on your dinner. ■ GREGORY BYRNE