fact that evidence for modular recombinants is related to an evolutionary time scale supports our contention that "new viral diseases are usually due to minor variants of already known viruses . . ." (p. 1396). It is against the background of novel virus diseases, caused by minor variants, that the risk of recombinants, derived from diverse transgene and virus genomic sequences, should be considered.

Most of the plant viruses for which we now have an understanding in molecular terms have been associated with specific plant diseases over the entire period of disease documentation. This is contrary to Gibbs' point that a recombinant between distinct viruses is more likely (than a recombinant between genomes of similar viruses or strains) to cause widespread disease. We agree with Gibbs that a significant departure from existing virus types may offer greater possibilities for adverse disease consequences than do minor variations in virus type. However, as we stated in our Perspective, this effect is balanced by the much poorer competitiveness that is likely to be characteristic of most such recombinants, as well as the low frequency of their occurrence. The evolutionary time scale over which new virus types appear is consistent with the great rarity of successful recombinants derived from diverse parents.

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NIST: What's in a Name?

Most people knew that NBS meant the National Bureau of Standards (NBS), not the National Bureau of Science. But then it had been around for almost 90 years before its name was changed to the National Institute of Standards and Technology! So perhaps we should forgive *Science* for misidentifying the acronym NIST in the title and text of Philip H. Abelson's 20 May editorial (p. 1063). But this slip has deeper implications. The mission of NBS was to support the science of measurement, metrology. Many are surprised to learn that this does not mean simply maintaining platinum bars or masses. Today the meter is

defined by the wavelength of light, and voltage and resistance have quantum standards. It is vital to U.S. competitiveness (*1*) that "standards" remain a primary mission of NIST. This is why "standards" was kept in its new name. We hear a great deal about NIST's new "extramural" programs such as the Advanced Technology Program and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, but without metrology, these programs cannot succeed. Quality depends on accurate and precise measurement.

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Fire Ant Control

The article by Charles C. Mann (18 Mar., p. 1560) does an excellent job of highlighting a number of important economic and ecological concerns about fire ants; however, we would like to clarify several points. First, Sanford Porter is located at the Medical and Veterinary Entomology Research Laboratory in Gainesville, Florida. Second, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned mirex in 1977, not 1971. Third, and most important, the first leg of the three-legged stool that Williams described was chemical control through the use of naturally degradable toxic baits, not the "occasional use of mirex," as stated in the article. Since mirex was banned by the EPA, we in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) have not considered or suggested the use of mirex for fire ant control. The USDA-ARS has strived for an integrated approach to the control of the imported fire ant using a variety of methods, including chemical, cultural, and biological means.

Unfortunately, at the present time, only chemical control has been successful; however, we have high hopes for the implementation of the other methods, especially biological control.

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Response: I thank Williams and Porter for their kind words about my article and am interested to learn that the use of mirex is not contemplated by the federal government. I wish that Williams could have told me this earlier, for it was he who told me that the agency was contemplating "occasional use" of mirex, and it was to him that I read the entire passage in draft form, including that phrase. Mirex has a long, complicated history. According to the EPA press representatives whom I consulted, it was initially restricted in 1971. A political battle ensued, and the agency finally passed a stringent ban in 1977, although it was still used in some places, especially Hawaii, until the mid-1980s.—***Charles C. Mann***

Corrections and Clarifications

The News & Comment article "DOE ponders yet more uses for SSC" (13 May, p. 898) by Christopher Anderson incompletely identified the source of a proposal to use Superconducting Super Collider magnets to measure the refractive index of light in a strong magnetic field. The principal investigator is Talso Chui at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, in collaboration with researchers from a group of institutions in the United States and the Republic of China.