

SCIENCE

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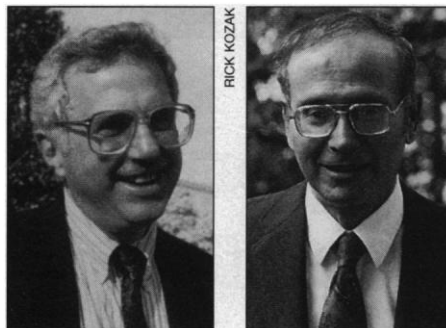
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LETTERS

Succeeding Generations

Journal editors not only edit journals, they often use their bully pulpits to inform, arouse, and lead the scientific and technical communities in times of change. As Ellis Rubinstein points out so well in his editorial “Punctuated equilibrium in scientific publishing,” (9 June, p. 1415), a number of experienced editors and leaders have recently been replaced, in some cases by persons with less experience in the worlds of publishing and public affairs.

What Rubinstein does not mention is a similar phenomenon of even greater importance—changes in the senior leadership of a number of key scientific and technological institutions. Frank Press and Robert White at the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering, respectively, have been replaced by persons less experienced in the ways of Washington. Dan Burton just left



New opportunities, lost experience? Bruce Alberts (left) and Frank Press (right), new and past presidents, respectively, of the National Academy of Sciences.

the presidency of the Council on Competitiveness, from which he has provided leadership on industrial technology issues. One hardly knows where to begin in cataloguing the loss to the community of wise and experienced leaders among both the members and staffs of the House and Senate committees that authorize and appropriate funds for scientific and technical programs.

These changes could not have come at a worse time for American science and technology. The changes in Congress and the larger public mood threaten major cutbacks in federal support for research and development, as well as radical surgery on the major institutions that fund and use scientific and technical information. Strong

voices of caution and some opposition to current trends are badly needed; by-and-large they are not being heard.

I hope the new editorial voices of the major scientific publications will move swiftly to help fill the leadership void. The front pages of *Science* are a good place to begin.

Christopher T. Hill

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Rubinstein's forebodings about the departure of Daniel E. Koshland Jr. from *Science* (already accomplished) and me from *Nature* (impending) flatter us with phrases such as “institutions in the profession,” but they are misplaced. Rubinstein appears to forget that the succession of the generations is always enlivening, that people appointed to important positions only in early senescence will not have time themselves to become institutions, and that there has probably never previously been a time when the scientific literature was as much in need of people who know their way about the World Wide Web.

Rubinstein himself may be too young to appreciate that even older people also have other things to do.

John Maddox

Editor,

Nature,

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 London N1 9SQ, United Kingdom*

I am deeply saddened by Rubinstein's misleading and inaccurate editorial. I am unable to discern any point or purpose to this mean-spirited attempt to discredit people just taking up important editorial positions in science publishing. The new editors identified by Rubinstein have not been in office long enough to prove themselves. One had yet to even take up her new duties. Where is the sense of fairness and mutual respect that has long been characteristic of the science-writing and communications community? Toy journalism such as this quickly erodes the credibility of any publication, even the very prestigious.

Rubinstein's comments to the effect that Madeleine Jacobs is not really qualified to be editor of *Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN)* and that she may subvert the publication's journalistic traditions and move it toward becoming a house organ are

graceless and unfounded. They are also inappropriate and irresponsible. But, most important, they are wrong.

It is often said science works only because of the trust and collegiality among scientists. This is true. So I don't understand why *Science* decided to violate this principle with its own peers.

Michael Heylin

Editor-at-Large,

*Chemical & Engineering News,
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Washington, DC 20036, USA*

Response: It is understandable that Heylin, as Jacobs's colleague, would wish to defend her. And journalists and *C&E News* readers alike will be delighted if Jacobs enhances both the vigor and authority of that publication's news coverage. But Heylin's argument goes too far and may mislead.

Hardly a day goes by when a columnist isn't analyzing the odds of success of prominent figures undertaking new responsibilities. Some sports writers predicted from day one that the sensational basketball player Michael Jordan would not make a very good baseball player. Likewise, most scientists would comment if a prominent laboratory plucked from the ranks of its marketing team the next head of basic research. Edi-

torial writers tip us off with prescience; those who are wrong soon find themselves ignored. Jacobs has sought, and is taking on, high responsibility. Like all occupants of powerful positions, she will be scrutinized from the outset. Science journalists, in conducting this scrutiny, should hold themselves to the same standards of journalism that their mainstream colleagues do.

Ellis Rubinstein

Rubinstein's editorial is a brave piece. He is absolutely right to draw attention to a sudden lurch in the direction of lightly qualified scientific editors. All kinds of dangers can result from the appointment of inexperienced and youthful editors. He will probably get some brickbats, but I was pleased to see him take a stand.

Simon Mitton

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Science and Political Reality

Richard S. Nicholson (Editorial, 2 June, p. 1259) expresses a variety of concerns that I

would like to address. At times he appears to misunderstand what the new Congress is trying to accomplish, and at other times he does not acknowledge the restraints placed on a responsible government. On the basic issue, however, both of us agree—funding for academic research is a vital investment in our nation's future.

Unfortunately, the political reality of today means that continuing to fund research and development (R&D) alone is not enough to ensure a bright future. We have a huge budget deficit, an inefficient bureaucracy, and government interference in areas best left to private industry. In order to fix these problems, while keeping the strong basic science infrastructure of which Nicholson writes, government needs to establish a coherent philosophy of the role of federally-funded science. As Chairman of the Science Committee, I have been attempting to articulate such a philosophy.

First, we should return the focus of government-sponsored research to the area of basic science where it belongs. Every year the United States pumps billions of dollars into corporate welfare, shelling out money to the R&D departments of huge corporations while accomplishing little. For every hundred dollars spent by government on

**This is my system for affinity
separations of polyclonal
and monoclonal antibodies,
enzymes and fusion proteins.**

