tributed on an item-by-item basis).

Not only does this last measure make any kind of scientific programming impossible, but it leads to a form of clientelism in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of the CNRS. Just when difficulties make good management a necessity, negotiation and discussion are becoming less frequent, the opinion of the National Committee is rarely taken into account, and the editorial boards of journals are being disbanded.

Matters are equally difficult in the area of personnel. Because of insufficient recruitment of young researchers, the average age of the researchers in the department is rapidly increasing (48 years and 7 months in 1995). In addition, two out of every three positions vacated because of retirement have been struck from the books.

As the gaps between North and South and between East and West are widening, and as the French nation is slowly becoming aware of the number and seriousness of the fractures that threaten it, humanities and social sciences are more than ever needed to understand such phenomena and to help find a responsible attitude toward the future.

While we are not systematically opposed to restructurating, provided the measures proposed are clearly expounded and discussed, we cannot accept practices that entail the paralysis of many French research teams and the loss of committment of the personnel involved. That is why the undersigned have appealed to the Prime Minister of France.

Marc Augé, *Ecole des hautes études en science sociales (EHESS), 54 boulevard Raspail, 75270 Paris cedex, France;* **François Bédarida,** *CNRS, 3 rue Michel-Ange, 75794 Paris cedex 16, France;* **Michel Berry,** *CNRS;* **Pierre Bourdieu,** *Collège de France, 11 place Marcellin Berthelot, 75005 Paris, France;* **Robert Boyer,** *EHESS;* **Roger Brunet,** *CNRS;* **Gilbert Dagron,** *Collège de France;* **Maurice Godelier,** *EHESS;* **Christian Goudineau,** *Collège de France;* **Jean Guilaine,** *Collège de France;* **François Héritier-Augé,** *Collège de France;* **Jacques Le Goff,** *EHESS;* **Daniel Roche,** *Université de Paris 1 (Sorbonne), 5 place du Pantheon, 75005, Paris, France;* **Alan Touraine,** *EHESS;* **Bernard Vandermeersch,** *University of Bordeaux, 1 avenue des Facultés, 33405 Talence cedex, France;* **Jean-Pierre Vernant,** *Collège de France;* **Pierre Vidal-Naquet,** *EHESS;* **Nathan Wachtel,** *Collège de France;* **Jean Yoyotte,** *Collège de France.*

■

Warning! Long Commute

The title of Joel Cohen's book *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* (Book Reviews, 3 May, p. 696) reminds me of medieval debates about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. No doubt these were scholarly in their own way. There are, of course, "ultimate limits to human population." For instance, human population could never increase to the point at which all of the carbon on Earth is contained in human biomass.

In the same issue of *Science* as this review, which talks about a lack of warning signals of overpopulation, is a mention that in Bangkok the average commute is now 3 hours daily, certainly a sign of local overpopulation (Random Samples, p. 657).

More important, and central to many of the themes explored in the book, is the question: How many people *should* the Earth support?

Ken Zafren
10181 Curvi Street,
Anchorage, AK 99516, USA
E-mail: zafren@corcom.com

■

Toxicology of a PFPE Surfactant

W. J. Brock of DuPont Haskell Laboratory in Newark, Delaware, and A. E. Feiring of DuPont Fluoroproducts R&D in Wilmington, Delaware, have recently provided unpublished data regarding the toxicology of a perfluropolyether (PFPE) surfactant similar to the one we reported in our *Science* paper of 2 February (Reports, p. 624). They found that PFPE surfactants can cause decreases in body weights and increases in liver weights in rats. Thus, our PFPE surfactant is not likely to be biologically inert, although fluorinated surfactants are often biochemically stable (*1*). Many fluorinated surfactants exhibit very low toxicities, and they have been used clinically in blood substitute applications (*2*). A preparation containing perfluorotripropylamine and Pluronic F-68 is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use during percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty. We thank Brock and Feiring for bringing their data to our attention.

Keith P. Johnston
Department of Chemical Engineering,
University of Texas,
Austin, TX 78712–1062, USA
E-mail: kpj@che.utexas.edu
Ted Randolph
Chemical Engineering Department,
University of Colorado,
Boulder, CO 80309, USA
Frank Bright
State University of New York,
Buffalo, NY 14250, USA
Steve Howdle
University of Nottingham,
Nottingham NG7 2RD, United Kingdom

References

1. E. Kissa, *Fluorinated Surfactants* (Dekker, New York, 1994).
2. G. M. Vercellotti and D. E. Hammerschmidt, in *Blood Substitutes*, K. C. Lowe, Ed. (VCH, Cambridge, UK, 1988), pp. 173–183.

Letters to the Editor

Letters may be submitted by e-mail (at science_letters@aaas.org), fax (202-789-4669), or regular mail (*Science*, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA). Letters are not routinely acknowledged. Full addresses, signatures, and daytime phone numbers should be included. Letters should be brief (300 words or less) and may be edited for reasons of clarity or space. They may appear in print and/or on the World Wide Web. Letter writers are not consulted before publication.

Corrections and Clarifications

Figure 2 (p. 371) in the Perspective "Green light for steroid hormones" by David W. Russell (19 Apr., p. 370) contained errors. The correct figure is printed below.

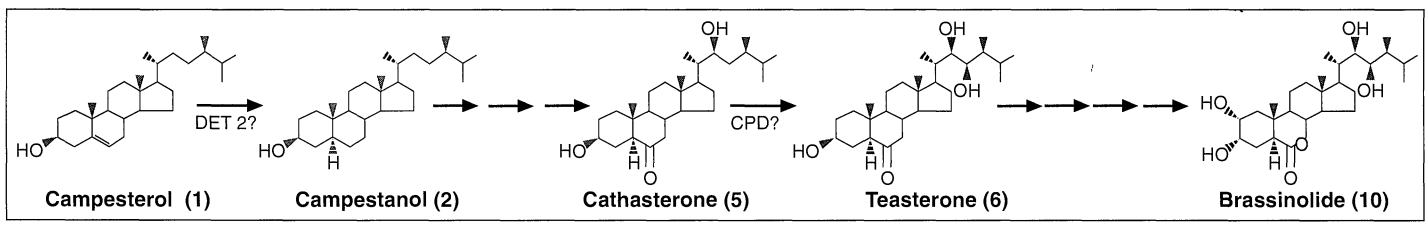

Fig. 2. The biosynthetic pathway of brassinolide. Genetic evidence in *Arabidopsis* suggests that the *DET2* and *CPD* gene products catalyze the indicated reactions in the multistep pathway leading to brassinolide. [Courtesy J. Chory, Salk Institute]