among those. The issues raised in this letter are indeed important ones, and they were addressed at the meeting.

Untapped Source of Diplomats

In her speech at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in February (AAAS is the publisher of *Science*), Secretary of State Madeleine Albright indicated her interest in facilitating a scientifically literate State Department (News Focus, "Science gains at State Department," by David Malakoff, 3 Mar., p. 1583). But the first step she mentioned—hiring an upper-echelon official at the State Department to handle scientific matters—is likely to serve no other purpose than to increase the conspicuous top-heavy elitism at the department. The way to improve the scientific literacy of State Department officials, from diplomats to bureaucrats, is to hire more (not less or even none at all) scientists as foreign service officers and science attachés at U.S. embassies overseas.

There is a relatively large pool of trained scientists who have extensive and sophisticated international affairs and global science policy experience who are either ignored or are not considered "diplomatic" material on the basis of their inability to pass an outdated foreign service officer examination. It is perverse that such scientists, who may have lived overseas for many years and may speak a multitude of foreign languages, cannot find positions at the State Department—an agency in which the scientist might find himself or herself, ironically, highly overqualified.

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Respect for the Opposition

Although I agree with the theme of Senator Christopher Bond's Editorial "Politics, misinformation, and biotechnology" (*Science*'s Compass, 18 Feb., p. 1201), I feel that when communicating science issues to the public, one has to consider both language and tone. While reading Bond's Editorial, I often took issue with how he phrased his argument. If I hadn't already agreed with his main point, I might have dismissed his thesis entirely. For example, his sentence "Opposition...has been driven variously by trade-protectionist and anticorporate sentiment, by competing food marketers such as the whole-foods industry, and by scientifically unsubstantiated fears of change and technology" seems to belittle those on the other side of the argument and to characterize their concerns as being irrational. If opposing opinions and concerns in such a debate are not respected, it makes it difficult to reach compromises, let alone convince opponents why some biotechnology advances might be beneficial. Another sentence, "The hysteria and unworkable propositions advanced by those who can afford to take their next meal for granted have little currency among those who are hungry," seems to play to people's emotions rather than their good senses. Statements like this can damage our argument, which is supposed to be based on rationale.

In the age of biotechnology, we should learn how to convince the public that our theories are sound as thoroughly as we would hope to convince a reviewer. The key to successfully implementing scientific advances in the public realm is through education and discussion with the public, not an elitist approach, which could ultimately lead to a public distrust of scientists (and politicians).

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In his Editorial, it seems specious for Senator Bond to suggest that "naysayers" may subvert biotechnology and condemn children of the world to malnutrition, sickness, and environmental degradation. In spite of the gains cited, hunger has not been eradicated anywhere, including in the United States. The solution to the problem of hunger more likely lies in the political realities of today than in the technological fixes of tomorrow. In addition, the prime motivation for much of biotechnology is profit; because most of the areas of the world where hunger is rampant are short on capital, it is hard to see how people in these areas will benefit from the new biotechnologies. And a final point: "naysayers" are not Luddites; they do ask, however, that the risks associated with these new technologies be borne by those who stand to profit from them, and that the biosphere not be used as an experimental resource without the explicit informed consent of those who live within.

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pH Values Below Zero

In the Editor's Choice selection titled "The natural lowdown on pH" (R. Brooks Hanson, 11 Feb., p. 933), the comment is made that "[s]olutions with negative pH are possible theoretically but beyond the range of most sensors and buffers." Ah, yes—but lest we forget, there was a time when the reactions that occur at negative pH values