

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Board of Directors

GEORGE W. BEADLE, *President*
PAUL B. SEARS, *President Elect*
WARREN WEAVER, *Retiring President*
WALLACE R. BRODE
JOHN R. DUNNING
MARK H. INGRAHAM
PAUL E. KLOPSTEG
CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE
MARGARET MEAD
THOMAS PARK
LAURENCE H. SNYDER
PAUL A. SCHERER, *Treasurer*
DAEL WOLFLE, *Administrative Secretary*

DAEL WOLFLE, *Acting Editor*
CHARLOTTE V. MEETING, *Assistant Editor*

Editorial Board

WALLACE R. BRODE KARL LARK-HOROVITZ
MARK H. ADAMS EDWIN M. LERNER
BENTLEY GLASS WILLIAM L. STRAUS, JR.

Editorial Staff

PEARL BOBIER, CATHERINE H. BORRAS, BEVERLY
BUHNERKEMPE, SARAH S. DEES, JOAN DELL, OLIVER
W. HEATWOLE, M. DALE HOOPER, YUKIE KOZAI,
ELLEN E. MURPHY, ROBERT V. ORMES, BETHSABE
PEDERSEN, JOSEPH TURNER, JACQUELYN VOLLMER
EARL J. SCHERAGO, *Advertising Representative*

SCIENCE, founded in 1880, is published each Friday by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Business Press, Lancaster, Pa. Entered at the Lancaster, Pa., Post Office as second class matter under the Act of 3 March 1879.

SCIENCE is indexed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and in the *Industrial Arts Index*.

All correspondence should be addressed to SCIENCE, 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington 5, D.C. Manuscripts should be typed with double spacing and submitted in duplicate. The AAAS assumes no responsibility for the safety of manuscripts or for the opinions expressed by contributors.

Change of address: The notification should reach us 4 weeks in advance. If possible, please furnish an address stencil label from a recent issue. Be sure to give both old and new addresses, including zone numbers, if any.

Annual subscriptions: \$7.50; foreign postage, \$1; Canadian postage, 50¢. Single copies, 25¢. Special rates to members of the AAAS. Cable address: Advancesci, Washington.

The AAAS also publishes THE SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY.



Rushing into Print

There is a tendency these days among scientists to rush into print. More often now than ever before some scientists, having submitted a communication for publication, eventually ask to withdraw it or to be allowed to modify it because they either have discovered an error or have since learned that some of the work has been done elsewhere. This tendency is also revealed in the appalling state of corrected proofs received from some authors—sometimes peppered with corrections and changes which are, at the least, very expensive to make. Rushing into print is also inspired by the bugbear of priority. For example, the request by an author that his communication should be treated as urgent because he has learned that similar work is being done elsewhere is now treated like the cry of "Wolf! Wolf!" Requests of this sort are happening far too often. How refreshing it is when one team of workers, having heard that another is working along the same lines, gets in touch with the second group and arranges a joint communication.

There is much complaint today concerning the amount of scientific literature that each scientist must read if he is to keep pace with his own subject. There are many reasons for this overwhelming spate, not the least of which is the overenthusiasm of scientists themselves. Too many of them imagine that just because they have written a scientific paper it is worthy of publication. The result is that the whole field of our literature extends over a wide range of scientific merit.

Much of the detail published in a research paper is of limited interest and value. Men of science might well consider publishing only the main points of their research and filing the rest for possible reference. It was the late Lord Rutherford who once said that when writing a letter to *Nature* if you cannot say all that is really necessary in 500 words or less, then something is wrong. If every scientist throughout the world believed this and took it to heart, then I can visualize even *Nature* having no time-lag in publication at all. It is significant that, though *Nature* frequently returns a communication to an author with a request that it be reduced to two-thirds or one-half of its present length, I can recall only two or three instances in the whole of my more than a quarter of a century connection with *Nature* of an author replying that he could not cut his communication.

I rather imagine it would be a good idea if every communication submitted were returned without even being read by the editor, with a covering note asking: (i) Are you sure you have said what you want to say? (ii) Have you said it in the minimum number of words? (iii) It is worth saying at all? Too many scientists, especially younger ones, seem to assume that the value of a scientific paper varies directly as its length. I would strongly urge that men of science thoroughly train themselves to hold their lips tight and their pens dry until they know the facts or are sure of what they wish to say.—L. J. F. BRIMBLE, *Nature* (London).