

Letters

Nonprofit R&D and the Free-Enterprise System

The position of the American Council of Independent Laboratories with regard to commercialized research at universities and "nonprofit" institutes has been fairly put in Elinor Langer's recent report (News and Comment, 17 Apr., p. 273). The last sentence, which reflects J. H. Holloman's theory, certainly requires rebuttal, however. Basically it concerns the survival of the fundamental philosophy of American government. [Langer reported that Holloman, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology, "has been doing some stumping for the principle" that industry should "give more research and development work to universities." The sentence referred to said, "... while ... in the short run the civilian technology program will lead industry to turn to universities more readily, perhaps at the expense of some private labs, in the long run any program directed toward a basic expansion of the civilian economy should work to the benefit of all participants in the field."] Implicit in a free-enterprise system is equal opportunity to compete. Government may abuse its privilege by taxing one section of industry to support that industry's competition or—what amounts to the same thing—exempting the competition from paying taxes.

The fact that independent, tax-paying scientific laboratories are relatively small and may be engaged in R&D does not alter the morality of the situation. Holloman might with equal logic argue that the taxes of Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors should be used to subsidize a government factory or, better yet, a nonprofit "institute" to turn out superior vehicles. Since such a factory could have available large funds and would be blessed by being free from the burdensome necessity of paying taxes, it would, without doubt, produce vehicles at a considerably lower price than its tax-paying competitors and thus increase the

number of cars in each household. Then—to paraphrase Langer's words—even at the expense of some of these private industries, in the long run an expansion of the economy by an increase in the number of cars should work to the benefit of all participants in the field.

And who is to pay the taxes to run the government now? Well, there's still a chemical industry. And if that—and others—fall too? Well, the people still pay taxes, and besides "they" will own all of industry.

If we're going to live under socialism, at least let us vote on it and not becloud the issues by representing that, if reached bit by bit, it will "work to the benefit of all participants in the field."

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... The point that is missed by most writers, including your reporter, is that tax-supported universities frequently perform these "research" services for a fee, and the results, including any patents developed, are for the exclusive benefit of private parties. The American Council of Independent Laboratories considers such practices unfair, unethical, and of course contrary to free-enterprise principles.

The vague term "socially useful" has been used in explaining what we regard as socialistic practices. As your writer says,

Many bystanders, while publicly lamenting the trend to commercial research, have privately rejoiced to see the opportunities develop and ... favor still closer ties between the academic and the business communities.

This school of self-interest is no doubt back of the proposed Civilian Industrial Technology program which was recently "thoroughly emasculated in Congress." This program would provide funds for the support of extra staff at universities to perform technical services for industry. It would take for its model the Agricultural Extension Service, which

was set up in 1862 when the farmer had no radio, no electricity, no telephone, one weekly newspaper, and one yearly farmers' almanac and was 30 miles from the county seat, without a car and without a road, and there were no agricultural schools. This is the model that is supposed to assist today's industry!

It is ACIL's opinion that consultants and engineers *in business* are better prepared to advise and assist *business* in developing the economy of our country.

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Birth Control: Science and Values

In "Science and the new humanism" (*Science*, 10 Jan., p. 111), Hudson Hoagland states as one of his conclusions:

Racial discrimination, chauvinistic nationalism, and objection to population control by methods of contraception represent value systems based on archaic and parochial notions at variance with what science has learned about the nature of human conduct necessary to advance cultural evolution in the nuclear age.

As a physical scientist I must register a protest at his judgment concerning population-control methods.

I concur with Hoagland that elimination of racial discrimination and chauvinistic nationalism are advances in human behavior. Granted that there is necessity for population control in certain countries like India, science does not dictate the necessity for using a particular method, for example contraceptives, for attainment of population control. Science—which is, in G. G. Simpson's formula, simply an exploration of the physical universe—increases man's knowledge of the various means available for population control—contraception, rhythm, periodic continence, sterilization, and others. The effectiveness of any of these means may of course be evaluated by established scientific methods; however, the particular means selected by any individual or applied on a national basis are many times based on value judgments that rest outside of the scientific or biological realm, namely, on convenience, moral, philosophical, theological, or even trivial reasons. To reduce moral, philosophical, or theological reasoning to "archaic and parochial notions" reveals either a lack of