

# Letters

## The Smartest People

Along with David L. Garth, the publicity man hired by Scientists and Engineers for Johnson (News and Comment, 11 Dec. 1964, p. 1444), I'm certain the "guy in Pittsburgh in a T-shirt with a can of beer in his hand" was capable of recognizing "the smartest people in this country," because the smartest people in this country say in constant repetition they are the smartest people in this country. All readers of *Science* are no doubt waiting breathlessly for more pearls of wisdom of this kind.

DWIGHT A. PAYNE, JR.  
450 Ulman Avenue,  
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

As a professional scientist turned amateur I was fascinated by the glimpse into the brave new world of scientific thought afforded, on the one hand, by the letters responding to Dwight Ingle's article on race and, on the other, by D. S. Greenberg's superb exposition of the organization of the anti-Goldwater campaign.

Members of the Other Culture are no doubt marveling at the parallel construction of medieval treatises on heresy and the letters castigating Ingle for his blasphemy in suggesting that racial differentiation may possibly extend to intellectual capacity. Quite plainly there are thoughts too unthinkable to be contemplated, let alone published.

The article on Scientists and Engineers for Johnson presents the spectacle of thousands of scientists and engineers being herded into a gigantic public relations maneuver, designed to convince "any guy in Pittsburgh in a T-shirt with a can of beer in his hand . . . that the smartest people in this country considered Goldwater unfit," by a few individuals prominent in the scientific community because they have been appointed to offices of public trust.

I am uncertain whether to admire the ingenuity with which new creative tasks have been found for the Defense Director of Research and Engineering and the members of the President's Scientific Advisory Committee, or to be saddened at how quickly C. P. Snow has been confounded by this brilliant achievement in welding together the Two Cultures.

STUART T. MARTIN  
WCAX-TV,  
P.O. Box 608, Burlington, Vermont

Greenberg's careful and detailed report provokes disturbing questions concerning how scientifically and technically trained citizens can best make their special abilities available to their society. Henceforth will managers and other key participants in vital federally supported research programs let their jobs and co-workers wait while they take extended political leave at regular 4-year intervals? Will honored national scientific figures make key telephone calls that set the necessary "wheels in motion" to excuse university teachers and researchers from their professional responsibilities for several months so that they can direct political campaign activities?

One wonders if Melpar would or should have granted "equal leave" to employees on the other side of the political fence from MacArthur and Nichols, and whether Harrison Brown spent any time looking for someone on his staff of opposite persuasion to Murray to whom 7 weeks' political leave should be granted in the interest of bipartisanship.

Greenberg's article brought to mind an account of an episode in the office of the distinguished chief engineer of the Maryland Department of Health before World War I. During a conference with a newly employed junior engineer, the chief absent-mindedly opened and scanned an inter-office memo, snorted, cursed under his

breath, and passing the memo to the junior said, "Look at that." The junior read it, his jaw dropped, and he said, "What are you going to do with it?" The chief took it back, tore it up, and deposited the scraps in his wastebasket. The memo was a request that each supervisory employee of the state collect from each of his subordinates 1 percent of his annual salary as a contribution to the campaign fund of the political party in power in the state.

LEE MARC G. WOLMAN  
172 Claflin Street, Belmont,  
Massachusetts

## A Matter of Syntax

Would all scientists who write research reports or review articles in English kindly consider the syntactical dilemma represented by the following sentence:

We are investigating anaerobic bacteria (A B) from contaminated dermestids (C D) requiring exogenous factors (E F),

and its variant,

We are investigating A B requiring E F from C D.

The problem in the first version is, Is it the *bacteria* or the *dermestids* that require the *factors*? Similarly in the second, is it the *bacteria* or the *factors* that come from *dermestids*? A number of ways out of the dilemma may be considered:

### 1) Substantival adjective:

We are investigating contaminated-dermestid A B requiring E F.

This is a variant of German word order—

from contaminated dermestid anaerobic bacteria

but is not acceptable English.

### 2) Compound adjective:

. . . anaerobic, E-F-requiring bacteria from C D.

The compound adjective is clumsy. Accurate placement of hyphens is essential; note that we are dealing not with *exogenous factor-requiring bacteria* or with *exogenous-factor requiring bacteria*, but with *bacteria requiring exogenous factors*.

### 3) Parenthetical phrase:

- a) . . . A B, requiring E F, from C D.
- b) . . . A B (from C D) requiring E F.