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Why Scientists Speak Out

Lykken's and Deans' letters (11 March) on "Scientists and social and political problems" miss the point of scientists' concern. Whether scientists are more capable than others in resolving social problems is not the issue. Weapons are the technological result of the work of a large segment of the scientific community. No member of the profession can escape the onus this places on science as a whole. Should there be any question of the right, even responsibility, of scientists, either individually or as a group, to speak out on public issues which vitally affect, and are influenced by, their work?

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Tough Old Boys at M.I.T.

I don't think I am an unduly sentimental alumnus of M.I.T. (class of '22), but Carter's article on my Alma Mater's past and future ("M.I.T.: New president will pursue broadened goals," 25 March, p. 1511) gave me the feeling that he didn't know as much about his subject as he should have. It isn't so much that "Tech is hell." This is, or was in my time, only a fragment of an undergraduate college yell which began "*We are happy; Tech is hell—*" and then went on to complete itself in an ingenious 19th-century fashion. Carter could have been much more to the point if, in speaking of the Institute's third president, Francis Amasa Walker, he had cited Walker's famous remark which, as much as anything, set the Institute's tone, and did it in the 1890's. "The Institute," said Walker, "is a place for men to work, not for boys to play." This thunderous statement was made a full half-century and more before most other university officials began mumbling about The Necessity for, uh, Excellence.

In the days when Abbott Lawrence Lowell (a political scientist) was president of Harvard, Richard Cockburn Maclaurin (earned doctorates in mathematical physics and in law) was president of M.I.T. Judging from the languid pace at the Yard end of Massachusetts Avenue in the 1920's, Maclaurin was able to keep up his end of things along Memorial Drive better

than Lowell did amid the mystical spiderwebs of Harvard Square. Lowell, it will be remembered, took over from Charles William Eliot, who had prepped for the educational game, if I may put things that way, by being M.I.T.'s first professor of analytical chemistry.

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NIH Traineeships

A recent directive of the National Institutes of Health concerning the use of traineeships provides an illustration for Wolfie's statement (Editorial, 1 April) that "the decision as to how each student will spend his years of working for the doctorate is . . . often determined by the source of his financial support rather than by what would be educationally most beneficial."

This particular directive recommends that once a graduate student is put on a fellowship supported by a training program he remain on that program throughout his graduate study. This will preclude the practice we have been following of using training funds for an initial 1 or 2 years of traineeship and then transferring the students to NIH predoctoral fellowships or research grants as may seem appropriate.

It is almost impossible to start a student out on an NIH predoctoral fellowship because of the long delay between application and award. No trainee would wish to wait so long to obtain confirmation of support. Also, it is very difficult to start a student out on a research grant at a time when he is spending a major portion of his time in course work, because of the "percent of effort" statement required of our grant personnel. The present directive will unquestionably reduce the number of graduate students in our department by a third, possibly by half, at a time when training more pharmacologists has become an important aspect of medical education. I am afraid that the people responsible for establishing such regulations are not in close touch with the problems of administering graduate programs in the medical sciences.

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