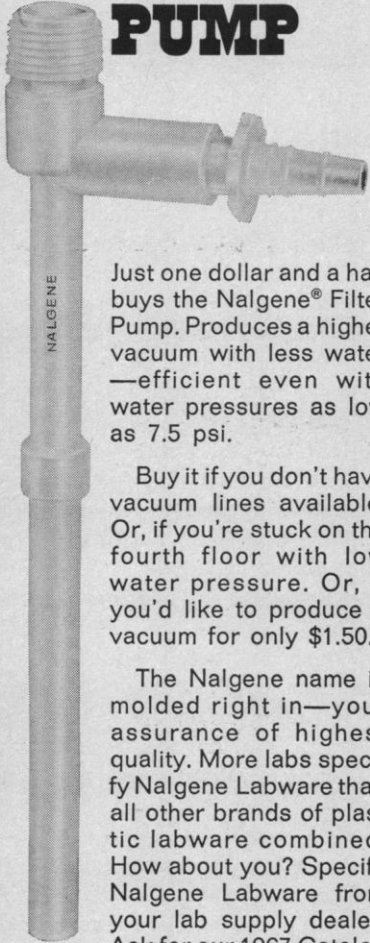


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Congressional Testimony

I, too, was much distressed by the partisan article, "The great research boondoggle," referred to in Abelson's editorial ("A partisan attack on research," 9 June, p. 1315). In his criticism of the magazine article, Abelson said, "The article is also very damaging when it quotes a professor of chemistry at a large university as saying that government support of research is 'potentially the most powerful destructive force the higher educational system has ever faced.'" That statement was made by me before a congressional subcommittee, but the following paragraph is the *complete* expression which I presented on my views of government support of university research and demonstrates clearly that the quotation as it appeared in the article was taken out of context (1).

The present program for Government support of university research including the methods and policies for granting and administering funds, is at the same time the greatest benefit and also potentially the most powerful destructive force the higher education system in America has ever faced. Federal support has created opportunities for the evolution and advancement of human knowledge and for the stimulation of creativity far beyond the most prodigious expectations of our current senior scholars. University scientists, particularly the young men, with and without tenure, are working unbelievably long hours and with a passion that suggests a compulsion to prove their worth to society. At the same time an imbalance between the effect at the graduate and undergraduate levels has arisen with the results that the talents of the undergraduate students are not being developed. Hence the supply of dedicated teachers, competent scientists, engineers, scholars, and well-informed citizens is being constrained dangerously due, in part, to a loss of the stimulation, guidance and experience-inspired knowledge which traditionally has been passed on to the students by the research scholars.

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Reference

1. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, H.R., 89th Congress, 1st session (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1965), p. 5.

Such attacks by quoting titles of valid research projects are unfair but not new.

In 1892, Congressman Hilary A. Herbert of Alabama nearly destroyed the U.S. Geological Survey by ridiculing the paleontological work of O. C. Marsh. He displayed a special author's

edition of Marsh's work on toothed birds, a sumptuous volume with morocco binding, gilt edges, wide margins, specially tinted paper, and a wealth of illustration, "... pointing to it as an excellent example of the way in which large amounts of Government money were being wasted" (1). The next day Herbert admitted that Marsh had written to him 6 years earlier, pointing out that the work in question was not published by the Geological Survey, that the cost of illustrations (and special printing) had been borne by the author, and that a supposed duplication of printing was only of a 40-page abstract.

In spite of this admission, "birds with teeth" continued to appear in speeches against the Survey as a symbol of government waste. The House voted to end all federal work in paleontology. Senator Wolcott of Colorado indicated that the birds themselves were not important, "... but here is a chance to cut Survey appropriations." The Geological Survey was eventually saved only by the resignation of Director John Wesley Powell in 1894.

Today it would be just as tempting for a congressman to launch such an attack on radiation studies as a way of cutting the AEC appropriation or an assault on biochemistry to "get" NIH. Scientists should do their best to inform the press that a book, or a research project, should not be judged by its title.

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Reference

1. C. Schuchert and C. M. LeVine, *O. C. Marsh, Pioneer in Paleontology* (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, Conn., 1940), p. 317.

Why's of Weightlessness

Lilley's letter (9 June) on weightlessness in space corrected one popular misconception but propagated another with the statement, "The gravitational forces on an Apollo crewman will be very weak for much of his journey, and his weightless condition will indeed be due to his remoteness from the earth and moon."

The reason for weightlessness during an earth-moon trajectory (which, even at the gravitational minimum point, is still subject to appreciable solar gravitation) has nothing to do with decreas-