

# Letters

## Objections to Fountain Report

The Ninth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, *The Administration of Research Grants in the Public Health Service*, and Fountain's letter of 24 November, are open to question and criticism in several specific respects. My present personal exceptions to these contributions of Fountain and of his committee are based on very general grounds. Speaking as an individual scientist, as a former member of PHS advisory groups, and as an ex-NIH research project grantee, I object to the following.

1) The committee report and the letter are framed in terms which many might consider as adversarial rather than cooperative, vendetta-like rather than sincerely constructive. The criticisms and recommendations employ such derogatory words and phrases as "weak," "surprisingly casual," "excessive." Insinuations of poor performance (or of poor intention) are contained in the recommendations "to eliminate some of the abuses that have developed," "establish a high standard of quality as the basic qualification for research project support," and others. The phrasings remind one of the humorous recommendations beginning, "In order to keep you from beating your wife. . . ."

2) The suggestions of conflict of interest in members of advisory groups and the corollary denial of the value of experience and expertise by members of advisory groups carry implications that are unjustifiable. The advisors of NIH and of PHS, as of other governmental agencies, are properly drawn from those individuals who have acquired special information by years of dealing with problems of progressively increasing scope and complexity. The uses and value of experience are recognized in politics (local to state to national office), in business, and in science. Fountain surely would not suggest alternate terms of eligibility for

political office holders or any limit on sequential terms for them, as he proposes for members of NIH Advisory Groups. The acquisition of information by service on an advisory group does not make an individual unfit for the subsequent use of his special knowledge and skills on the same or on another advisory group.

3) Finally, I find Fountain's resurgent criticism particularly inappropriate at this time. The PHS is undergoing concentrated self-study and reorganization is being considered. The present NIH director is completing a long and most useful term, while a successor is being sought. Competition for funds for the support of biomedical research grows at a faster pace than the funds available. This is a time for constructive criticism, for recognition of the high value of the grants program in stimulating major advances in the biomedical sciences in the past decade, and for the encouragement of an effective review system, rather than for this hyperbolic and adversarial report and letter on PHS and NIH.

One cannot find Fountain's stated objectives other than praiseworthy. Scrutiny of the expenditures of government agencies is desirable. Our elected representatives have this as one of their many responsibilities. However, criticisms need to be correctly based, properly framed, and presented appropriately as to point of time if they are to help rather than hinder, to assist more than they injure. I can assure Fountain that I know of no member of an NIH Advisory Group, and I count very many among my friends and acquaintances, who does not share his intense interest in the nation's health. I know of none not sincerely concerned that the approaches to the attainment of biomedical knowledge be efficient and effective.

J. F. A. McMANUS  
5103 Alta Vista Road,  
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

## Animal Care:

### Voluntary Accreditation

Animal care legislation again is in the news following introduction of the Javits-Rogers bills (S. 2481, H.R. 13168). Whether additional federal regulatory legislation really is needed so soon after passage of P.L. 89-544 will be debated increasingly in coming months. A major provision of the Javits-Rogers bills is a requirement for accreditation of laboratory animal facilities by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare or by an accreditation agency approved by him. A voluntary accreditation program has been functioning since January 1965, using the standards in the U.S. Public Health Service *Guide for Laboratory Animal Facilities and Care*, and the following is a report of the initial results obtained by the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care.

Up to November 1967, 122 institutions applied for accreditation. They included 50 educational institutions (universities, schools of medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, public health, or pharmacy); 18 U.S. government laboratories; 12 hospitals; 6 independent research institutes; and 36 commercial laboratories. Site visits and evaluation of the animal care programs were completed for 104 institutions by the Council on Accreditation. Of these, 66 (63 percent) were accredited initially; 26 (25 percent) were provisionally accredited; 12 (12 percent) were denied accreditation. Thirteen provisionally accredited institutions and one nonaccredited institution subsequently corrected deficiencies and were fully accredited. Thus, up to December 1967, 80 (77 percent) of the 104 institutions, on which action has been completed, were accredited, with their programs varying from passable to superb.

The major deficiencies in animal care in provisionally accredited and nonaccredited institutions included overcrowding of animals, poor sanitation, inadequate quarantine and disease control, or incomplete postsurgical care. These institutions are moving rapidly to overcome deficiencies in program, personnel, or physical plant so that they can be fully accredited just as the above-mentioned 14 institutions were accredited after correcting deficiencies found during the initial evaluation of their facilities.

It is noteworthy that 45 percent of the medical schools are already par-

ticipating. Also officials of many institutions not yet in the program have expressed intention to seek accreditation. This suggests that within a few years AAALAC's voluntary approach could encompass all scientific institutions which use significant numbers of laboratory animals. The willingness of member organizations and scientific institutions to finance AAALAC through contributions and site visit fees, in spite of their difficult financial problems, are further indicators of their support of the program.

Professional accreditation and peer evaluation are well established concepts in the scientific community; and there is no reason to doubt their value in assuring adequate care of animals during use in education and research. As more and more scientific institutions participate, this voluntary program will succeed.

BENNETT J. COHEN

*Animal Care Unit,  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

As an animal researcher, I agree with the general layman's feelings that standards for research animal care and housing should be set and enforced; however, I also favor imposing equally stringent controls on commercial firms which sell animals for pets. Probably the most serious violations of sanitation and evidence of neglect occur in department stores and discount houses which maintain animals as a subspecialty and have no properly trained persons to care for them. . . . Unfortunately, the profit motive does not insure against mistreatment any more than does the research motive.

BARBARA J. POWELL

*8 Dunmore Court,  
St. Louis, Missouri 63135*

### AMA Persecution Complex

MacAulay's comments on the changing relationship between physician and patient ("Within the purview of the AMA," Letters, 15 Sept.) should not be allowed to pass without comment. MacAulay states that 80 percent of patients need no medical attention but only the physician's reassurance; formerly this was sufficient but now, with government intrusion, patients insist on their "right" of needless hospitalization. Even if I were to follow the Red Queen's advice to take a deep breath and try, I can't believe a statement like that. I suppose someone, sometime *wanted* to

go to the hospital; after all, there is doubtless someone who gets his kicks by pounding his thumb with a hammer. That such occurrences are numerous is unthinkable. Even if one's taxes pay hospital bills and doctors' fees, they do not repay lost earnings nor provide compensation for inconvenience. A stay in the hospital may involve pain; it certainly involves discomfort and confinement and being treated like an infant.

The American Medical Association persecution complex, of which MacAulay's letter is an expression, contends that the rest of us are out to impose on them and "enjoy" medical services we don't need. This complex can be placed in perspective by comparing it with the opposite viewpoint. Cynical laymen in this country and foreigners who are not accustomed to the fee system of medical practice often express the opinion that the fee system generates unnecessary work. After all, the doctor can increase his income by *not* reassuring me but instead telling me to come back again next week; under Britain's national health scheme there is no such occasion for financial incentive to bias professional judgment.

GEORGE B. DUTTON, JR.

*4729 Yuma Street, NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20016*

### Alan T. Waterman

A quiet man in the corridors of power, Alan Waterman advanced the postwar union of science and government as much by his personal integrity as by the merits of the case. He matched reason with faith in arguing the values of science as a public good, defending both its utility and its deeper relevance to the aims of a civilized people. He made policymakers understand that no culture can call itself complete without a strong vein of creative curiosity and the will to pursue it for humanistic as well as technological reasons.

He was a man for his times, and his life had purpose. To those who had to make the hard judgments as to the course of public policies, Alan Waterman's word and the texture of his intelligence counted for a great deal indeed. In the process, he enriched more lives than he knew.

Now that it seems important, one remembers the small thing of coming upon him on the beach at Scientists Cliffs to find him poking in the clay for fossil teeth, as the September sun

dropped behind the trees and a freshening wind stirred the ravines, and the man of science bent to his work.

WILLIAM D. CAREY

*Office of the Director,  
Bureau of the Budget,  
Washington, D.C. 20503*

### On Limiting Offensive Weapons

Your account of my remarks at the Atoms for Peace ceremony was so abbreviated as to change significantly the whole point of my argument (News in Brief, 24 Nov., p. 1029). In my paper, "Let us prepare for peace," I argued that the present military emphasis on offense (characterized by the posture of "assured destruction") and de-emphasis of defense was a more dangerous situation than the reverse: a de-emphasis of offense and an emphasis of defense. I therefore urged a deployment of defensive systems (anti-ballistic missile and civil defense), and a simultaneous and earnest attempt to limit offensive weapons. I believe it is only in this case, where offense is limited by tacit or explicit agreement, that defensive deployment will blunt the ability of man to destroy himself—but never so completely as to make nuclear war a rational instrument of policy.

ALVIN M. WEINBERG

*Office of the Director,  
Oak Ridge National Laboratory,  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831*

### Virginia's Marine Institute

The proposed joint program between Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (8 Sept., p. 1154) bears resemblance to the much older cooperative program between the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary. Courses are generally offered at VIMS main campus at Gloucester Point and, less frequently, on the main campus of William and Mary or the University. The Institute, which has not sought separate accreditation, serves under these affiliations as the School of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary and the Department of Marine Science of the University. Responsibility for the use of the Institute's laboratories, ships, and equipment by scientists and stu-