while the richest and most powerful nation of the twentieth century uses the resources of modern science to intervene in the problems of poor and distant lands. Our Association objective "To increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress" compels us to refute the view that scientists and engineers are responsible for and endorse, by their actions or by their silent consent, the wanton destruction of man and environment, in this case through warfare.

The Council of the AAAS urges an immediate cessation of hostilities and an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The second war-related resolution put the AAAS on record as supporting in principle the proposed "Vietnam War Ecological Damage Assessment Act," introduced in the last session of Congress by Senator Gaylord Nelson (D–Wis.) and Representative Gilbert Gude (R–Md.). The bill, which Nelson moved quickly to reintroduce, would require federal agencies to cooperate with the National Academy of Sciences in a large-scale assessment of the effects of "carpet bombing," the use of antipersonnel CS gas, and the bulldozing and defoliation of large forest tracts in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The AAAS resolution urged an evaluation of both "constructive and destructive" effects of "American science" in Indochina, but, Pfeiffer commented, the latter is presumed to vastly outweigh the former.

Others, among them Leonard Rieser of Dartmouth, the AAAS president envisioned the academy study as only the first step in a prolonged evaluation of the war's impact on Indochina. Rieser, for one, suggested that the government establish a permanent organization similar to the federally supported Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, which has spent the past 25 years observing the long-range medical effects of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Washington *Post* quoted Rieser as saying that such a study was vital to the intelligent rehabilitation of Vietnam and may be the only means of learning the truth of many allegations, such as the charge that the spraying of herbicides by the United States has caused birth defects in Vietnamese children.

The subject of herbicides in Indochina led some council members to wonder what had happened to the AAAS's own study of ecological damage in Vietnam, for which the association paid $80,000. The answer seems to be that the final report of the AAAS Herbicide Assessment Commission will be out sometime this summer in manuscript form, 2½ years late.

In December 1969 the AAAS board appointed Harvard biologist Matthew Meselson to head the commission and to prepare a detailed report on the effects of the military defoliation campaign. Meselson and four other scientists subsequently made a 5-week inspection tour of South Vietnam, in the summer of 1970, and carried out a review of the pertinent literature.

The team's preliminary findings, embodied in an 8-page summary and 48 pages of background material, were reported to a widely publicized news conference at the AAAS meeting in Chicago in December 1970. The board expected to see a final report about 2 months later, but so far only the brief summary and backgrounder have appeared in print, and even then only in congressional documents (see *Congressional Record*, 3 March 1972).

In a telephone conversation last week, Meselson blamed the delay on his "full teaching load" and on his decision to include much more background information in the final report than he had originally intended. Meselson also said technical problems had slowed the analysis of biological samples—among them mothers' milk and fish—for herbicide residues and metabolites. He said he hoped that the manuscript could be finished "by summer" and be in book form by fall.

In the meantime, some board members are said to be "impatient" with the delay, what with the prospect that the scientific impact of the AAAS study may be overwhelmed by the academy's 2-year, $1.5 million evaluation of herbi-

Training Grants, Peer Review in Peril?

The training programs that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) supports are treasured by most members of the biomedical community. Many are fond of calling these programs the "life's blood" of science. President Nixon and members of his Administration do not share the view that existing training programs constitute the best way of supporting young investigators and paying faculty salaries. According to Washington's ubiquitous "highly placed sources," the President plans to phase out the NIH training programs. The word, from persons who claim to know what his soon-to-be-released 1974 budget contains, is that, within 2 years, training programs will be either wiped out or so diminished as to be virtually worthless.

The prospect of the abolition of these training programs has aroused the biomedical community. Telegrams protesting the alleged budget-slashing have been sent to the White House and members of Congress by a number of groups, including the prestigious American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) and the elite Association of Professors of Medicine. The ASCI declares that "the very health of the American people is at stake."

The NIH training grant program apparently has been unpopular with officials in the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for at least a couple of years now. Their argument generally runs to the effect that there is no reason the government should pay to educate doctors so that they can then go out and make a lot of money. They would prefer to support young sicentists through research grants.

In the past, last-minute pressures have succeeded in keeping the training grant program intact, and many persons in the academic world are hoping they can save the program once again.

While the apparent threat to training grants looms in the form of a clear-cut matter of budget-cutting, a less clear and present danger to the traditional way the biomedical community conducts its business lies in the prospect of a revision of the peer review system for approving research grants. Generally, scientists feel comfortable with this system (*Science*, 12 January), but White House efficiency experts reportedly are less happy with it. Recently, for example, one member of the inner circle at the White House was heard to ask, "What are they doing with all those committees out there?"—apparently referring to study sections and other advisory committees at NIH.—B.J.C.