sedimentation of the large clumps that were formed.

Sun states that "Academic scientists who study the effects of ions confirm that the generators clear the air." I have not in 35 years of practice as an academic scientist specializing in dust collection ever heard of one. Furthermore, I suggest readers contrast Sun's statement that "ions are snatched up by pollutants" with Corn's comment, "Almost all industrial and domestic activities which produce fine particle pollution also produce air ions" (*4*).

Is it any wonder that the claims quoted in Sun's article raise the hackles of scientists who have been trying for decades to counter the exploitation of mysterious air cleaning devices that are promoted with testimonials by the gullable?

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Chemistry Computer Center

As representatives of the community most affected by the decision to scuttle the National Resource for Computation in Chemistry (NRCC) (Research News, 26 Sept., p. 1504), we feel compelled to make our view public regarding this example of public science policy in the making. Our own examination of the issue indicates that the decision of the funding agencies (the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation) is at odds with the general sense of the chemistry community and, indeed, we find that the decision-making process has essentially ignored community input. In the interest of possible future ventures into "big science" in chemistry, we feel that the scientific public should become aware of the nature of science policy decision-making and how it reflects on performance and politics.

At the Las Vegas meeting of the American Chemical Society (28 August 1980), the NRCC User Association decided to poll its membership (1700 scientists on its mailing list) regarding the report and recommendations issued by the ad hoc committee appointed by the funding agencies to review NRCC performance. It was felt that such a questionnaire was necessary because the report had recommended drastic changes in the nature of the NRCC, and yet the community to be affected had not even been informed of the recommendations.

The first question asked was if enough time had elapsed for a reasonable judgment to be made on the future of the NRCC. The second was whether the NRCC should continue in its present form for a longer time before critical decisions are made regarding its operation. The third question was whether the respondent agreed with each of the five recommendations of the ad hoc review committee.

Of the 200 members who returned their questionnaires within 2 weeks of mailing, 68 percent felt that not enough time had been allotted for proper judgment and 69 percent felt that the NRCC should continue as originally constituted for a period of 2 to 3 more years before review. The strongest disagreements were with the recommendations that suggest substantial changes in the way the NRCC now operates (79 percent were against switching software development away from an in-house scientific staff to an external postdoctoral program; 73 percent were against transferring software distribution to the Quantum Chemistry Program Exchange; and 53 percent were against stopping support of both internal and external computational research).

Shortly after the questionnaires were mailed out, a decision regarding the fate of the NRCC that goes beyond even the review committee's recommendations was reported in the pages of *Science*. However, no official announcement has been made, and no stated rationale for the decision has been made public by the funding agencies. Not only did the disclosure in the *Science* article emphasize to us the necessity of making our findings known as quickly as possible, it highlighted the manner with which this public policy issue has been handled since its beginning.

We have sent the detailed results of our questionnaire to the funding agencies and have urged them to reconsider continued funding for the NRCC. We have also asked them to issue a public report detailing the rationale for any decision that is made regarding NRCC's future.

We see a real danger when funders, effecting decisions concerning a national scientific resource, do not fully regard

the community being served. There are unmet needs within the chemical community that will grow without a cogent national policy on computational technology. Beyond the immediate harm of eliminating an organization whose focus was to address some of these needs, the larger danger exists of stigmatizing any future efforts in this area.

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Environmental Assessment

My colleagues and I read with considerable interest the editorial on environmental regulation by Richard C. Atkinson (29 Aug., p. 969) calling for a new national commission to develop a consensus among concerned parties on dealing with environmental problems over the next two decades.

A group with identical concerns has been formed and is known as the Environmental Assessment Council, of which I am chairman. The council has already attracted the participation of respected individuals from the private and public sectors, as well as academia, and includes Laurance S. Rockefeller, George R. Lamb, Abel Wolman, William K. Reilly, Robert G. Dunlop, Lane Kirkland and his representative Thomas Kahn, and Caryl Haskins.

The council, which is privately funded in order not to be dependent on established government policies, is dedicated to the mission of identifying our most significant environmental problems and recommending appropriate courses of action to deal with these issues from the standpoint of technical validity and responsible public policy. The council sponsored an initial background study by Resources for the Future to assess the current state of environmental regulation. With the completion of this report we have now embarked on an assessment program that will address national environmental priorities and the development of balanced programs for their management and resolution. We are also gathering data on the problem of acid lakes and some of the actions of our society that may be contributing to this condition. These studies, we believe, will lead to a better understanding of this problem.

This is a time when, as Atkinson points out, we need a more integrated utilization of scientific information and new analytical tools such as risk assessment to make judgments based on an informed consensus about developing rational future environmental programs. The council hopes to assist in resolving the difficult problems that confront us and to channel our best thinking and energies into equitable solutions.

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Fruit Fly Breeding

William J. Broad (News and Comment, 10 Oct., p. 168) calls attention to an impending crisis in the field of fruit fly genetics resulting from the rapidly decreasing availability of half-pint milk bottles as laboratory breeding vessels for *Drosophila melanogaster*. And, reflective of a national malaise, Broad notes that, "Yankee ingenuity has produced no answers and the worried parties are looking overseas for a solution."

But what's wrong with half-pint mayonnaise jars or the like? Glass manufacturers in the United States still produce those in quantity, and innovation is as apt a concept for U.S. science as for U.S. industry.

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Credit

In the article "Thalassemias: Models of genetic diseases" (Research News, 17 Oct., p. 300), my name is mentioned in connection with data concerning β^+ thalassemia. Most of these data were actually obtained by Lynne Maquat and Alan Kinniburgh, postdoctoral fellows in my laboratory.

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Erratum: In the article by Don E. Dumond, "The archeology of Alaska and the peopling of America" (29 Aug., p. 984), the scale bar in Fig. 4 on p. 987 is more than twice as long as it should be to represent 1 centimeter. The artifact in part a, for example, has a maximum width of about 3.5 centimeters.