create confusion and excessive and unnecessary accounting requirements and thus needlessly raise the costs of conducting research. Consideration should be given to returning to a fixed and reasonable indirect cost rate, such as that in force before 1966 (see K. T. Brown, *Science*, 24 April 1981, p. 411).

3) Large center grants and program projects, valuable for multidisciplinary programs, also support investigators already funded for other research; such funding might be reexamined to determine how much of this type of support we still can afford in a time of crisis. Allocation of shrinking funds to such large proposals and contracts occurs at the expense of individual independent research projects which most scientists feel are of greater value to our national research efforts.

4) A dollar limit could be placed on total support for an individual investigator's laboratory.

The sliding scale now appears to be particularly attractive, but all these ideas should be considered, and a combination of them may be worth trying. In any case, our objective is to initiate a review of current funding procedures and to support a larger fraction of highly meritorious research proposals.

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*The authors are, respectively, president and chairman of the NIH grants committee of the Association for Medical School Pharmacology (AMSP), an organization composed of chairmen of departments of pharmacology in medical schools of North America. Most members of ASMP contributed to this document, which was initially presented on 10 January 1981 and adopted in essentially its present form on 21 May 1981 by ASMP. Since that time, the situation described above has clearly deteriorated even further.

Health Effects of Radiation

On 4 January, at the AAAS annual meeting in Washington, D.C., a session was held on the health effects of radiation featuring a group of speakers who have published few papers on that subject in refereed scientific journals in the past several years. The principal paper by one of the speakers (*1*) has drawn more than 20 scientific critiques (*2*); its results also have been rejected by committees of the National Academy of Sci-

ences (*3*) and other prestigious national and international commissions (*4*) with membership broadly representative of the scientific community. None of those offering these critiques appeared on the AAAS program.

In presenting this group of speakers, the AAAS has performed a distinct disservice to the scientific community it purports to represent. What is worse, it has served to mislead the American public by appearing to give the support of the scientific community to the work of this group.

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References and Notes

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3. Committee on Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR), *The Effects on Populations of Exposure to Low Levels of Ionizing Radiation* (National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1980).
4. The International Commission on Radiological Protection has met several times since publication of reference 1 and has pointedly stated that there is no new information available that would suggest altering its recommendations. If any degree of credence were given to reference 1, it would be urgent to change these recommendations. The U.S. National Council on Radiation Protection and national commissions in all other countries have acted similarly.

Erratum: In the cover legend for the issue of 5 February, the second sentence should have read, "Fire is used periodically in the life of pine stands to manipulate understory vegetation and to reduce the risk of wildfire by controlling litter buildup."