Letters

Cancer Advisory Board

As current or former members of the National Cancer Advisory Board, we are very concerned about the present composition of the Board. Our concern is not related to any individual member who has been appointed recently; rather, it is related to the proper functioning of the Board.

As specified in the National Cancer Act, the Board is legally responsible for final approval of grants, such as those to individuals, program projects, cancer centers, and community oncology programs. The Board also reviews both in-house and extramural clinical and basic science programs. As a result of the current good working relationship with the director of the National Cancer Institute, the Board has become increasingly involved in the program of the National Cancer Institute: It advises the director on its views concerning the appropriate balance of the various research efforts, and it provides guidance as to which areas should be emphasized and which should receive less funding. In order to meet these diverse obligations, the Board has, in the past, included six basic scientists, six clinical scientists, and six lay members.

We are concerned because, at present, there is only one basic scientist on the Board. Four basic scientists (Ames, Amos, Pitot, and Shubik) and two lay members left the Board in June 1982; none of the new appointees is a basic scientist. Only one member of the current Board has a Ph.D. or an M.D./Ph.D. degree. Of the new members, none has been a member of a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study section or has ever had an R01 grant from the National Cancer Institute, and only one has ever served on an NIH council. Thus, the current Board lacks representatives with the appropriate research credentials to assess the quality of the review of grants by the study sections or review groups and to act on appeals from scientists for rereview of their grants.

Members of the National Cancer Advisory Board, unlike the members of all other NIH councils, are appointed by the President. It appears that the new Board members were selected by the White House staff with little understanding of the *appropriate balance* between clinical and scientific experience and the public interest that is necessary for the Board to fulfill its functions properly. We believe that the scientific community should be aware of these changes in the composition of the Board, because they will have a direct and deleterious effect on American scientific programs that are supported by the National Cancer Institute.

A number of courses of action are possible, including writing directly to the President and to appropriate scientific and professional societies. We hope that, in the future, emphasis will be placed on correcting this imbalance by the appointment of basic scientists of the highest quality.

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Arms Control and National Security

AAAS members and other readers of *Science* may wish to know about the activities of the AAAS's new Committee on Science, Arms Control, and National Security (*1*).

In 1980, the AAAS Board of Directors formed an Ad Hoc Group on Arms Control. The main function of that group was to prepare symposia for the January 1981 AAAS Annual Meeting in Toronto around the theme of "Directing science toward peace." In April 1981, the Board created the Committee on Science, Arms Control, and National Security and asked it to focus the resources of the AAAS toward "exploring and fostering effective approaches to conflict resolution, control of nuclear weapons, and improvement of national security assets."

Surely the time is ripe for a robust and informed debate on these matters. The President's proposals on defense and arms control, the resumption of arms talks at Geneva, the proliferation of arms sales, the congressional debates on military strategy and budgets, the national interest in "nuclear freeze" proposals, and the strikingly varied interpretations of Soviet capabilities and intentions—all have heightened interest in what constitutes national security. While U.S. science and technology have aided the successful policies of deterrence since World War II, now is the time to reevaluate the interactions of technology with foreign policy, defense programs, and arms negotiations. Moreover, next year the roughly $220 billion for defense generally (including about $24 billion for military research and development) will influence most areas of the economy, several major industries, overall employment levels, and the entire national technical enterprise, including universities.

Taking all of this into account, the committee is examining what activities it can undertake. Ideas include educational materials of all kinds; scholarly articles in professionally refereed journals on science, technology, and national security; fellowships in the fields of science, arms control, and national security; analysis of military R & D expenditures in relation to goals for both arms control and deterrence; review of the relationships between the Pentagon and the R & D community for the 1980's; and discussions of international security arrangements such as the conceptual foundations of "verification" for arms treaties.

On behalf of the past and present committee members listed below, I in-