

Letter to the Editor

Following is a letter written in response to Past President Brian Duling's open letter which appeared in the June 1995 issue of *The Physiologist*.

In your open letter to APS members, you relate the visits you made with Martin Frank and Alice Hellerstein to congressional offices. You explained the discussions you had and the positions you took as our representatives. In your discussions you agreed with the opinion that cuts have to be made in the financing of scientific research and suggested that it is time for scientists themselves to make the decisions about which existing programs should be dropped and which should be maintained. You were impressed by the fact that people in Congress are ready to hear where cuts can be made and that at least one congressman was offended at the reluctance of scientists to point fingers and name names.

We have seen, however, that all these congressmen who point their severe slashing fingers toward the budget of biological research, health care, and educational programs, as well as toward foreign aid and international collaboration, fight vigorously for the procurement of unneeded weapons and for the maintenance of unnecessary military installations, especially when the weapons are produced and the installations are located in their voting districts.

Following the levels set by the budget resolutions by both houses, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved a \$264.7 billion military budget bill for fiscal year 1996. They approved \$7 billion more than the Pentagon requested. Congress is also prepared to spend \$7 billion more than the Pentagon requested next year and \$11.14 billion more in 1997. The plans of both houses to spend over and above the very generous military budget of the administration are larded with the addition of different military fight-

er and bomber planes, two more Aegis destroyers, and a potpourri of other pork-barrel projects from amphibious assault ships and army trucks to barracks and day care centers.

The congressmen who voted for this very substantial increase in military spending want us to agree voluntarily to slash the health science budget, even though the total yearly NIH budget is only about \$11 billion!

Despite the fact that our science budget is very modest in relation to the large military expenses, all the results of the work are very important. They make it possible today to maintain a healthy life for our citizens to a degree never seen before. New successes are on the horizon. The prestige of American science is high. It is clear, on the other hand, that the enormous amount of money by which military spending is increasing is a waste of taxpayers' money.

You suggest that we should be prepared to point our fingers at those whose research should be eliminated and at those whose research should continue. You know that your work is excellent and your colleagues in the committees agree that it should continue. You will therefore, agree that their excellent work should also continue. The research of the scientists not represented in the committees of power would, therefore, have to be discontinued. Their knowledge, their skill, their talent, and their enthusiasm would be wasted. Finger pointing has nothing to do with the quality of science, rather it is necessarily determined only by the position of the individuals in the power structure.

As responsible citizens, the members of the APS cannot agree with decreases in funding for biological or any other type of research. We cannot collaborate in this process with finger pointing.

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Council Meets in Bethesda, MD

The summer Council meeting was held in Bethesda at APS headquarters June 23–25, 1995. One of the highlights of the summer meeting is Council's opportunity to meet with committee chairs, receive reports on their accomplishments during the past year, and listen to their plans for the coming year. (These committee reports were published in the August issue of *The Physiologist*.)

In addition, Council and committee chairs were briefed by Lawrence E. McCray, Executive Director of the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy at the National Academy of Sciences, on the recently published report on graduate education in the US.

With each year's committee reports, it becomes more apparent that while the committees continue to work as independent entities on their own projects, increasingly they are joining forces to implement specific plans in areas of common interest. The recent increase in APS education and pub-

lic affairs staff may account for this trend. With its increased manpower, the staff is better able to coordinate projects involving multiple committees or groups, as well as make suggestions for such cooperative efforts.

Recent examples include the joint efforts of the Long-Range Planning and Program Committees and sectional representatives, along with APS Council, to revamp the Experimental Biology meeting to increase its drawing power among scientists through better and more exciting programming. The Liaison With Industry and Careers in Physiology Committees joined to support a seminar on possible career opportunities, both traditional and nontraditional, in physiology. The Education, Women in Physiology, Careers in Physiology, and Animal Care and Experimentation Committees jointly sponsor programs to develop resource materials for the precollege classroom concerning contemporary issues in physiology. In light of the positive results of these efforts, Council encouraged the committees