TOWARD PUBLIC APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE

(From the AIBS Communicator Vol. 1, No. 2, April, 1975)

It has become the fashion to express concern about the public's understanding of science. There is little doubt that an increasingly sophisticated public needs to be kept up to date on why its funds have supported R&D. For both understanding and appreciation, there is this need for continued communication on a daily basis and not in a frantic claim to eminent successes at the time of budget review. For a world that is extremely media conscious, science is making too few concessions to that increasingly anxious public. Just what have the concerned societies done to further the process of understanding or appreciation? What are the media available to them, and how have they changed their format, content, or distribution to achieve this informational function? How have they changed their journals to provide articles easier for the public to understand or more enticing to the science writer or news editor? How have their meetings changed, or do they still descend upon a campus or city, do "their thing" of impressing each other or accounting for the period since the last gathering of the clan, while the public or student body are none the richer for their having been on the scene? How many are preparing materials for radio, TV, local newspapers, or even student papers on campus? Just how are they acknowledging their obligation to the coming public in the general student population by changing courses away from the preparation of other specialists? Just what is it they are willing to give up from the old ways to accomplish those good things they talk about on an intellectual level? John Q. isn't always asking "What have you done for me recently?" Sometimes he simply says "Talk to me."

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EXPECTATIONS AND REALIZATIONS

(Introducing a Series of Commentaries on Curriculum)

Curriculum design and course content selection are highly variable processes. Depending upon the institution, they may reflect one person's concept or the collective thinking of a multitude, both from within and without the institution. Traditionally, one highly concerned group had little input. Students past, present and future, have not always been included. Even today input comes largely from current students, and avenues for prospective students and those who have already graduated do not normally exist. Even where student input exists it may be somewhat clouded by the position a student holds in the academic hierarchy.

In this issue (P. 8) MIDWEST BIOSCENE presents the first of a continuing series of commentaries by students - past, present and future - on collegiate biology courses and curriculum. It is the editor's hope that these will prove both interesting and stimulating.

Further contributions to this series are needed. Please suggest to present students and recent graduates that they respond to the question, "Did my college biology courses live up to my expectations, did they provide the essential understandings and information for the future?" Statements from biology majors, humanities or fine arts majors, teaching majors, persons in professional and vocational programs, and graduates now employed or working toward advanced degrees are desired. Individuals and institutions will not be identified; however authors of published statements will receive a letter of appreciation from the organization.

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