

Researchers protest defense research



UPI

DuBridge: Scientists are patriotic.

There is a gap between the consciences of many American scientists and the Government that supports the bulk of their research. Presidential Science Adviser Dr. Lee A. DuBridge has declared among his principal functions the closing of the gap.

The Nixon Administration has already taken steps designed to mollify increasingly alienated segments of the scientific community; the addition of \$10 million in basic research funds to the National Science Foundation in an effort to ease research crises on many campuses was such a move.

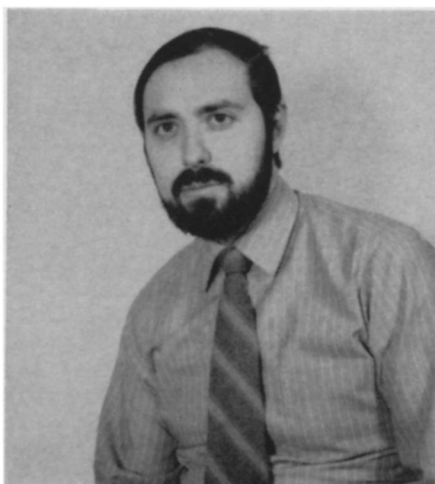
"I believe most scientists are patriotic," Dr. DuBridge says. But the palliatives do not quite speak to the disaffection among many scientists. That became evident last week when scientists on some 50 campuses declared a one-day moratorium on research, to discuss the ways in which science is being misused.

The day of symposia, called in some quarters a research strike, was less than a total shutdown: the University of Pennsylvania declared a holiday, but no other institution was closed, not even the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where what was called the March 4 Movement began.

And that the gap does not embrace all scientists was evidenced at the Government's Argonne National Laboratory, near Chicago, where some 80 of 1,300 workers staged a work-in, laboring through a 16-hour day in their laboratories as evidence of their feelings.

But an estimated 50,000 students across the country did participate.

Though the auditorium at MIT was jammed with researchers on symbolic holiday, one straightforward patriot did manage to claim the microphone long enough to sing a verse of "God Bless



Schwartz: It's humanity that pays.

America." He was roundly applauded.

The targets were largely overkill and underconcern with the quality of human life.

At the University of California at Berkeley, physicist Charles Schwartz denounced the policies that set the direction for scientific research. "The big loser," he declared, "is the human race, which has never been so afraid."

Schwartz was followed to the podium by another physicist, Dr. Charles H. Townes, who has been a scientific talent scout for President Nixon.

MEDICAL SAFETY

Accidents spur legislation

One of the first bills to have been introduced in the 91st Congress was H.R. 830, "to create a national commission to study quality controls and manufacturing procedures of medical devices. . . ." It has marched up Capitol Hill before.

The Food and Drug Administration has been trying for years to get control of hospital instruments that are presently uncontrolled and which can be dangerous as well as ineffective. But no hearings were held on previous bills; all have died in committee. Nevertheless, the effort to control medical devices by some of the same regulations that govern new drugs, is continuing. And it is not only the devices themselves.

The National Academy of Sciences and National Research Council back in May 1968, pointed out that "few hospitals have a safe electrical distribution system: overloading is the common characteristic." But this is not the only danger. Inexperienced personnel sometimes pressed into service can be dan-

gerous, and there are increasing reports of shock, burn, electrocution or explosion stemming from the use of electrical appliances.

Urging that scientists "do their homework and think and be ready" to push public policies in desired directions, Dr. Townes declared that "most people in Government are well-meaning and trying to do useful things."

"This doesn't mean they are always right, in fact it sometimes seems they are always wrong, but when you stand in the middle of them and understand the complexities of their problems, you reach a new understanding."

Back in Massachusetts, Dr. Howard Zinn, professor of government at Boston University, took a dimmer view. "We want to be able," he said, "to bring children into this world in good conscience," meaning a world in which air and water are not polluted, urban centers are not decaying, and there is no threat of nuclear holocaust.

Many of the speakers across the country addressed themselves to the uses of the money now being spent on the Vietnam War when that unpopular struggle is over.

On the same day, in Washington, Senator George S. McGovern (D-S. Dak.) introduced a bill that would establish a national commission to deal with the conversion to a peace-time economy. Its aim, he said, would be to bring "the human, physical and financial resources no longer necessary to the military into quick focus on the domestic challenges we so desperately need to meet."

"We must begin without delay."

It is impossible to get accurate statistics; as one Boston anesthesiologist says, "death from fibrillation induced by current from a heart catheter is indistinguishable from death by natural causes."

Instrument makers are the principal targets of the attack. Out of the present lack of enforced standards, the Underwriters Laboratories Inc., has demanded changes in the design of instrumentation systems.

Paul Stanley, a physicist at Purdue University, says in *ELECTRONICS* magazine, there should be a careful study to determine the dangers from poorly designed or operated equipment. He suggests a re-evaluation of the body's sensitivity to electric shock, particularly in regard to maximum safe currents, along with studies to find out whether a damaged heart is more susceptible to electric shock than a healthy heart.

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