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Incorporating Science News Letter

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COVER: A mammalian cell coated with hundreds of herpes simplex viruses (the tiny spherical structures) illustrates a major problem in designing drugs to kill viruses—how to selectively knock off the viruses without hurting the cell as well. See p. 186. (Scanning electron micrograph: F. W. Doane and N. Anderson, Dept. of Microbiology and Parasitology, University of Toronto)

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LETTERS

One Heisenberg did save

In the article on Heisenberg (SN: 3/6/76, p. 157), Goudsmit is quoted as saying: "He saved physics, he did not save physicists." I have reason to believe that I am one of the physicists saved.

When World War II broke out I had been an assistant at the University of Warsaw working on my Ph.D. thesis. I still gave a colloquium talk on a recent theory of Heisenberg's in early November 1939. The next day a German officer informed us that Hitler had ordered the liquidation of all Polish intellectuals, and advised us to disappear. I contacted Heisenberg who promptly invited me to come to Leipzig. There he made arrangements for me to register as a foreign student, and to get a parttime job as a streetcar conductor. As such, I got a foreign laborers' permit to stay in Germany. This arrangement worked during 1940, and I could attend classes regularly including Heisenberg's lectures on relativity. In early 1941, I was picked up by the Gestapo, but later released, so far as I know, thanks to Heisenberg's intervention. Authorities in my hometown had classified me as a "deutschfeindlicher Pole" (a Pole hostile to Germany), which normally would have implied a concentration camp and poor chances for survival. After this, I was no longer permitted to enter Institute premises, but Heisenberg made arrangements to see me privately, and to keep me supplied with all the materials needed to complete my thesis, which was eventually published without Institute address ("Quantentheorie der Strahlungsdaempfung," Z. F. Physik 120, 121, 1943).

A detail in your article worth correcting: Heisenberg's professor was obviously not Schrödinger but Sommerfeld, and the examination question mentioned was not about the telescope but the diffraction grating.

It might also interest your readers to learn that long front-page articles accusing Heisenberg of representing "Jewish Physics" in Germany had been published in the Nazi "Voelkischer Beobachter" in 1938 or 1939.

Edwin K. Gora
Physics Department
Providence College
Providence, R. I.

Ethics and corporate scientists

The AAAS session on "Corporate Scientists: Ethics of Dissension" (SN: 2/28/76, p. 135) shows how any ex-employee who resigned from a corporation is free to falsely accuse his former employer of any kind of

unethical or illegal act with no fear of contradiction. But most unethical of all, are the people in the news media who immediately spread the stories far and wide with no attempt to determine the facts, or even to point out that such ex-employees are not necessarily trustworthy sources.

The most ridiculous "accusation" was that of L. V. McIntire, who is quoted as saying: "Scientists must sign patent contracts that waive their legal rights to products they invent." At least it could have been pointed out that this is generally recognized as a fair type of contract, both in industry and government, because the employer provides the research facilities and the employee's salary, often for years, whether or not the employee succeeds in making an invention. Also, McIntire accuses the employer of suggesting that an employee resign instead of being fired. Obviously, if he is fired, his record would make it more difficult for him to get a job, so the company is trying to be helpful. However, McIntire apparently would prefer that the employee be fired. At least that would add another rebel to the ranks of the anticapitalists. His other, more serious accusations are to be ignored, since they are protected by the word "sometimes"—which could mean once in a hundred years.

Strangely, there was no criticism of government as an employer—or is this because it is impossible to be a sufficiently bad employee ever to get fired!

Ralph K. Iler
Wilmington, Del.

I want to congratulate you on very accurate reporting of the session on ethics and the corporate scientist. So often these days reporting is not objective and is taken out of context to make some over-spectacular eye-catching point. Thank goodness you and your associates didn't do that, and I think you are to be commended.

Arthur M. Bueche
Vice President
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General Electric Co.
Schenectady, N. Y.

After reading about the treatment given scientists by their employing corporations, I no longer wonder why women don't want to go into science. The question is: Why are men willing to put up with this abuse?

Sylvia H. Hoke
Washington, D. C.

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