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**COVER:** Nerve tissue growth after 18 hours in culture with L cells, a strain of fibroblast that secretes nerve growth factor (NGF). A quarter century after its discovery, NGF still presents a series of scientific puzzles. Why, for instance, is it present in so many tissues that seem to have little connection with nerve growth? Its full impact on life is yet unknown. See p. 330. (Photo: Young et al./PNAS)

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## Our own fight: A letter to our readers

The editors of SCIENCE NEWS have been denied accreditation to the Periodical Press Gallery of the United States Congress because the magazine is published by a nonprofit organization, Science Service, Inc. Since this exclusion seriously impairs our ability to report to our readers congressional action affecting science, we feel you deserve a full explanation.

For 40 years, journalists from Science Service were accredited to the Daily Press Gallery of Congress because their material was directly syndicated to as many as 100 newspapers across the country. The articles also appeared in the weekly SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, which eventually grew into SCIENCE NEWS magazine and began to require more attention of its own. Eventually, newspaper syndication rights were contracted to the Newspaper Enterprise Association, and SCIENCE NEWS journalists requested a change of accreditation from the Daily Press Gallery to the Periodical Gallery.

This request was denied because of anachronistic gallery rules with origins that stretch back more than a century. In order to exclude lobbyists masquerading as journalists, the Periodical Gallery demanded that members work for magazines "published for profit and supported chiefly by advertising, and owned and operated independently of any industry, business, association or institution." The "supported chiefly by advertising" clause was dropped recently, but the rule still effectively keeps out reporters for some leading scientific publications.

The effect comes down to this: The gallery recognizes reporters from periodicals like CHAIN STORE AGE and MODERN TIRE DEALER as worthy of accreditation, but it excludes those from SCIENCE NEWS, SCIENCE and CHEMICAL AND ENGINEERING NEWS. According to NEWSWEEK reporter Sam Shaffer, then chairman of the Executive Committee of Correspondents, Periodical Press Gallery, the activity of such magazines "falls outside the function of the 'Press' as an American institution."

Supposedly the accreditation question is decided by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, but its chairman, Sen. Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.), has followed long-established tradition by leaving the matter up to present members of the galleries. Unfortunately, in his letters to Cannon on the science magazines question, Shaffer not only stood adamantly opposed to their admission, but made some egregious errors indicating a simple lack of homework on the issue: Notably, he said that a problem would arise in the case of SCIENCE NEWS because a member of the Science Service board of trustees is appointed by the National Academy of Sciences—"a government agency." He went on to say that "we think it highly unwise to open gallery membership to any publication whose board of trustees would be nominated by a government agency." (The Academy has never been a government agency.)

The issue began to really heat up a couple of years ago when CONSUMER REPORTS, which had also been excluded, sued the correspondents association, which then claimed congressional privilege and asked the Justice Department to defend them! Federal District Judge Gerhard Gesell issued a scathing judgment against the gallery: "A group of established periodical correspondents have undertaken to implement arbitrary and unnecessary regulations with a view to excluding from news sources representatives of publications whose ownership or ideas they consider objectionable. The situation disclosed by this undisputed record flouts the First Amendment." An appeals court eventually ruled that the association had been acting as "agents of Congress" and were thus immune from the suit.

Largely through the efforts of SCIENCE correspondent Luther J. Carter, some senators began to push for a negotiated resolution of the conflict. Senator Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.) in particular has actively tried to set up a meeting between the opposing sides and has offered several suggestions for compromise. He proposes accreditation rules based on "volume of news" or on specific prohibition of lobbying activities, or establishment of specific exceptions for distinguished journals. (The NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC was given such an exemption some years ago.)

At the business meeting of the National Association of Science Writers on Feb. 22, John H. Douglas of SCIENCE NEWS proposed resolutions expressing the association's opposition to the "not for profit" requirement and offering to help negotiate the conflict. The resolutions passed unanimously and the NASW president, George Alexander of the Los Angeles Times, wrote on April 20 to Sen. Metcalf that "the Periodical Press Gallery has unfairly and unjustifiably denied accreditation to legitimate science reporters." Metcalf then aired the issue on the floor of the Senate April 27.

Theoretically, the Periodical Correspondents Association formed a committee to negotiate the issue, but its chairman, Neil MacNeil of TIME magazine, disbanded the committee without ever holding a meeting. And there the matter stands. Compromise has been blocked and we are still handicapped in our reporting congressional news for you. We will continue to do our best. —The Editors

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