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Cover: A genetically engineered mouse plays a role in a drama that involves a team of Boston researchers, Congress, the Secret Service, the National Institutes of Health and a postdoctoral scientist. At center stage is a complex scientific paper describing a surprising finding regarding immune-system regulation. As a federal inquiry of the case drags on in Washington, D.C., SCIENCE NEWS examines the science of the affair. (Illustration: Randy Fletcher)



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## Letters

### In the beginning

It's wonderful to observe the confusion and doubt that prevail on the COBE results suggesting the universe had a smooth beginning ("Cosmic Evidence of a Smooth Beginning," SN: 1/20/90, p.36). The "theorists" who are now forced to postulate the existence of some hidden mechanism for the smoothness of the formation of the universe might very well be compelled to reconsider a very old postulate: "... and on the seventh day ..."

*Leon A. Uziel  
Seattle, Wash.*

**The COBE findings** you describe could well support Stephen Hawking's comment that it's very possible that the universe always was — that there was no beginning, and consequently no Big Bang, and therefore no end. Furthermore, these findings suggest that Big Bang theorists operate from a simplistic, religiously based idea of the genesis of the world and the universe that evolved into a

restrictive, uncritically accepted premise that has determined what they were going to look for and consider: They have subconsciously allowed religious beliefs to dictate the form their science takes. Belief in a creator demands the Big Bang theory. Religious beliefs are all very well in their place, but they should certainly not be confused with factual process and should be kept separate from science.

*Janet Duthie Collins  
Godfrey, Ill.*

**I am troubled** by the theorists' postulation of "cold dark matter" as the mechanism by which structure ultimately emerges. Is not cold dark matter itself a structure that is not readily explained by the Big Bang? This seems analogous to explaining the appearance of life on Earth by saying "it arrived from somewhere else." From where did the cold dark matter come — if it exists?

*Donald S. Appleby  
Pleasant Grove, Ala.*

**All theories relating** to the formation of the universe in a "Big Bang" seem to be based on an infinitely massive clump, or point, at the center and a total void outside. Why not consider that the clump or point may have formed from the condensation of a previous universe, and that it reached a critical mass and exploded while galaxies were still streaming in toward the center and were then vaporized to a particle state as they became involved in the explosive force of the "Big Bang"?

Could this not have generated the turbulence necessary for the formation of new galaxies?

And, of course, this leads to a theory of a constantly recycling universe.

*Charles E. Kane  
Santa Rosa, Calif.*

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