Science Groups Forging Coalition To Inform the Public

A coalition of about fifty scientific societies is slowly coalescing in response to their leaders' shared imperative: to improve the public's understanding of science. The project is the brainchild of Nobel laureate physicist Leon M. Lederman, Ph.D., a recent president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The AAAS is serving as midwife for the nascent public awareness effort.

Already several years in the planning, the coalition may be announced as early as this spring, AAAS program officer Gerry Wheeler, Ph.D. — who is handling the logistics along with Lederman and AAAS ecologist and educator Shirley Malcolm, Ph.D. — said last month by phone from Washington. The name of the new coalition still is unresolved, Wheeler said, as the acronym for Public Understanding of Science is infelicitous. Also to be decided, he added, is how the coalition will be supported and governed.

Funding Is Provided

Start-up costs are being covered through a grant from the General Electric Foundation and by AAAS.

Science societies participating in organizing meetings — one of which is scheduled for Feb. 3, in Washington — include the American Institute of Physics, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, History of Science Society, Computing Research Association, and the National Science Teachers Association.

How public understanding of science can be improved remains unclear, Wheeler said. One metaphor guiding the coalition's thinking about what to do sees public understanding as "an empty vessel" that can be filled with positive information about science and technology. To do so, the coalition might, for example, pool members' resources to produce a steady stream of informative public service announcements (PSAs).

But this may not be enough, Wheeler acknowledged. "PSAs are not going to make people scientifically literate," he said. "Scientific literacy means having some conversation at the dinner table about scientific issues."

Participation Is Sought

A second metaphor guiding the coalition's organizers is the "cosmic dance." It means, Wheeler said, that the public has a right to know, and to be more involved in a scientific and technological society like our own. This approach recognizes that there are a lot of problems in our society, and people and forces need to get together, using science and other resources, continued on next page
A major newspaper has published an investigation of the Bernie Fisher case, and the damage it wrought:

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (P-G) is the hometown paper for University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) surgeon Bernard Fisher, M.D., the deposed chief of the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast Cancer Project (NSABP). The paper published its four-part "Anatomy of a Scandal" on the case from Dec. 26 to 29.

The investigation focuses on Fisher, professionally and personally. It recounts his anguish as his "years of achievement crumble overnight," and he is abandoned both by Pitt and by his funding agency, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) — but not by his NSABP associates. The paper says his colleagues backed him strongly when his troubles began.

Fisher describes his ordeal, particularly grillings by Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.) and staffers of his now reorganized Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, as "a reign of terror." The story reveals that Fisher and other witnesses were told to submit their testimony to the subcommittee in advance of a public hearing. It initially rejected Fisher's testimony because, in his words:

"There wasn't enough groveling in it."

The expose was written by medical reporter Steve Twedt and investigative reporter Mackenzie Carpenter. Together, they spent more than a year's time working on the four-part series. This is an extraordinary time commitment by newspaper standards, and explains why complex cases like Fisher's are so rarely unravelled.

The two reporters conclude, as we have, that the NSABP study stands (PROBE: April, May, Sept. '94). There was no risk to the public, contrary to allegations by John Crewdson in the Chicago Tribune (March 13) and others who reported the case against NSABP surgeon, Roger Poisson, M.D., of St. Luc's hospital, in Montreal and its fallout on Fisher. Twedt and

Coalition . . .

continued from preceding page
to work on solutions.

A third metaphor incorporates the drama of science — which might be expressed through a series of prime-time adult programs for TV or radio, Wheeler said.

Asked if the coalition will deal directly with anti-science forces in New Age, Creationism, and Animal Rights movements, Wheeler said, no.

"We've pretty much concluded that it is not," he said. "So we've stayed away from the political lobbying point of view in our set of goals."

New Outlook Foreseen

Nobelist Lederman, in a phone interview from his office at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, in Batavia, Ill., sounded a more confrontational note: The ideologues and others currently attacking science, he said, "are part of the burden we bear." His hope, he indicated, is that the coalition's efforts will help change the present anti-science trend in government and in public opinion.

A major issue, Lederman said, is to reverse the "incredible penalty" that science faces in the discretionary federal budget under the Republicans' Contract With America.

The still-unnamed coalition is an historic development, Lederman said:

"Never has there been an across-the-board defense of science." It is urgently needed, he added, "because never has science been so vulnerable," particularly in fiscal terms.

Nobelist Says: Fight!

"Science research in this nation is under attack . . . .

"The refrain of perceived public hostility, of congressional suspicion, of poor [public] understanding [is often heard]. Yet I do not know of any major research university president who has spoken out publicly in defense of research universities. The passivity of our presidents and the haste with which they confess that their campuses, their missions, and their accounting departments are badly in need of reform is very disturbing . . . .

"The accumulated power . . . is awesome, and never has there been a greater need for leadership. Yet from our [university] presidents, we hear only silence."

—Physicist L. Lederman to research university chiefs, at a UCLA symposium, June '94

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MEMBER, NEWSLETTER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Probe
Breast Studies Lagging, Fisher’s Foe Laments

The NCI official who fired breast cancer researcher Bernard Fisher — thereby stalling key studies and sending a chill through the research community — now says there are too few doctors, studies, and patients to adequately test promising new breast cancer treatments.

Oncologist Michael A. Friedman, M.D., who last spring yelled at Fisher by phone “You’re finished Bernie!” , told colleagues at a recent symposium at Georgetown University Medical Center, in Washington, D.C., that NCI now supports 37 breast cancer studies with 5,000 patients. But, he said:

“[T]his is a completely inadequate number to do anywhere near the kinds of research that we want to do.”

Friedman added, according to the medical monthly Oncology Times (Jan., p. 1):

“With breast cancer we have a growing list of features that appear to have prognostic or therapeutic relevance. . . . I really feel like we’ve discovered some new worlds, and we don’t know what to do with them. There’s a lot at stake here . . . .”

In a follow-up interview with Oncology Times, Friedman, who is chief of NCI’s cancer therapy evaluation program, listed a dozen drugs and therapeutic approaches that await adequate testing for want of research physicians and patients.

That, from the horse’s mouth, makes it unmistakably clear who is holding up breast cancer advances: NCI officials, and their chain of command up through NIH director Harold Varmus, M.D. and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, and her boss on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Given the Fisher debacle, why would doctors — or women with breast cancer — want to volunteer for the new studies that NCI’s Friedman wants to do?

Scandal . . .

continued from preceding page

Carpenter conclude, too, that Crowdon’s reporting hurt NSABP, cancer research, and breast cancer patients’ and the wider public’s trust in medical research. Fisher and his family have been devastated by the brouhaha.

Jobs Were Threatened

Reporters Twedt and Carpenter document Dingell’s powerful destructive role: “They’d give you ten demands,” Fisher is quoted as saying, “and wanted it all by 5 p.m.” An NCI executive said Dingell’s staffers “were all over us.”

NCI officials’ jobs were on the line, as well as Fisher’s. The reporters recreate his firing, by NCI oncologist Michael Friedman, M.D., who yelled into a telephone:

“You’re finished Bernie! . . .

“You got fucked by your staff. You’re out!”

Fisher Ditched

The reporters say Fisher was given no chance to defend himself in a hearing. Pitt had two choices: Comply with NCI’s dismissal of him — or lose $10 million annually in grants. Pitt, one NSABP member said later, “overreacted in a very paranoid fashion to pressure from NCI.”

The NCI and its administrators, up to and including Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Donna Shalala, all abandoned Fisher.

The reporters observe:

“During the testimony to come, not one [bureaucrat] would stand up for the man who is, arguably, the world’s greatest breast cancer researcher.”

Fisher was grilled publicly for two hours at a public hearing last June by Dingell and his congressional colleagues. At one point, the two reporters recount, Dingell cut Fisher off to say:

“One [NSABP] site had three-quarters of the participants ineligible.

“I am certainly unaware of that, sir,” Fisher replied, his

Fair Weather Friends?

“[P]erhaps most galling for Fisher has been his shunning by the NCI’s [chief] Broder.

“After his wife contracted breast cancer, Broder called Fisher last December [1993] for advice. They had long, friendly telephone conversations before the scandal became public, Fisher said.

“Fisher tried to call Broder to set up a meeting in the weeks after the news [about the breast cancer study] broke in March, but said he never got through to him and never received a call back.”

— M. Carpenter & S. Twedt, Post-Gazette, Dec. 29

Healy Hits Dingell ‘Abuse’

“As head of an agency [NIH] that was a frequent target of Dingell’s witch hunts, I saw first hand the abuse of power by a longtime committee chairman and his staff acting as secret police, prosecutor, judge, and jury under the old House of Representatives rules. Americans would be shocked to learn of the clandestine tape recordings, document theft, threats, foul-mouthed verbal rantings, and abusive closed-chamber interrogations of [Dingell] and his staff of over 100.

“Immune from . . . the laws against libel and slander, [they] operated in virtual secrecy, withholding any documents that displayed their methods of operation or contradicted their fabricated story line. This gave them carte blanche to make reckless and unsupported statements about people or institutions.”

— Ex-NIH chief Bernadine Healy, M.D., in letter to Chicago Tribune Jan. 20.

continued on next page
Fisher’s Fib May Have Cost Dearly

We were both pleased and irritated by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s report on the Fisher case. We were pleased by this acknowledgement:

“While Crewdson [of the Chicago Tribune] was credited with breaking the story of Canadian surgeon Roger Poisson’s deliberate fudging of cancer patients’ records, the actual scoop belongs to David Zimmerman . . . who wrote about the issue in September, 1993, in his PROBE newsletter — an irreverent publication that often defends science against its critics.”

Comment Requested

We were irritated to learn from the story that Fisher and his public relations representative lied to us when we covered the story: We had phoned repeatedly to ask Fisher, or his statistician, Carol Redmond, Sc.D., to comment on Poisson’s deceptions.

“Each time [Zimmerman] called,” the paper says: “Fisher directed his staff to tell [him] that he was out of town or unavailable. Eventually Zimmerman gave up.”

Which we shouldn’t have.

More important for Fisher, by talking to us he just might have saved himself some of his later pain. Reason:

The standard public relations advice is to be open and candid with the press at a time of crisis. The Post-Gazette says both Fisher, who initially didn’t think there was a crisis, and Pitt blatantly ignored this rule.

The point is, as New York City public relations executive Ted Klein explains, revealing the bad news yourself disarms opponents who would like to cudgel you with it.

Openness Is Disarming

PROBE is not big enough to have spared Fisher a beating either by Crewdson of the Trib, or Dingell. But: Had Fisher talked to PROBE, then later, in crisis, he could rightfully have said he wasn’t hiding anything. When a reporter phoned, he had been forthcoming.

This ability to deny that he hid information that Crewdson and others found to be of great public interest would have served Fisher in good stead in the year since.

Fisher now has talked to the Post-Gazette and others. The person whom we have yet to see quoted — and would like to — is statistician Redmond, who refused to speak to the Pittsburgh paper.

Stonewalled in this way, the question reporters always ask themselves is: What does this person have to hide?

Scandal . . .

continued from preceding page

voice cracking.”

The reporters checked Dingell’s allegation:

“[I]t wasn’t true.”

But Fisher nevertheless was beaten.

“After his fumbling performance . . . Fisher went home with his family, numb with grief.

“We were sitting shiva [mourning],” his daughter Beth was quoted by the Post-Gazette as saying.

Medical research has been hard hit as a result, Tweedt and Carpenter say:

The humiliation that Fisher has undergone, and the failure of Pitt and the NCI to stand by him, have sent shock waves through the scientific community.

If it could happen to him, many believe, it might happen to any scientist who is ambitious enough to tackle large and complex research projects, but might be a little too arrogant, or stubborn, or slow to respond to demands by federal agencies.

The atmosphere at NSABP’s 500 institutions, meanwhile, is “fearful.”

One effect of the Fisher scandal was to delay recruitment for a major study of the drug tamoxifen’s ability to prevent breast cancer. It recommenced only in November.

“If the study shows tamoxifen is an effective deterrent,” the reporters say, “that delay could end up costing some women

have saved himself some of his later pain. Reason:

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Paper Blasts Dingell

In a Dec. 30 editorial, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette says its reporters’ investigation shows that Bernard Fisher “bears some responsibility for the problems that befell him, but [he] was also the victim of nearly hysterical overreaction and political gamesmanship at its worst.

“At stake is more than the fate of one man,” the editorial explains. “A greater tragedy may be in the making if the fallout from this episode has a chilling effect on scientific research” — which the reporters say it already has.

Fisher should have corrected and republished the key breast cancer study, without the falsified data from Montreal, the newspaper says. But, it adds, that the public’s “dread” was “kept alive long after it was clear that the study was still valid. The culprit this time was the unconscionable political posturing of Rep. John Dingell.”

“He just blasted away,” the editorialist writes. “If a few not terribly guilty lives were ruined in the process, that didn’t seem to cost Rep. Dingell any sleep.”

The Post-Gazette editorial concludes:

“[I]f a scientist of the stature and accomplishment of Dr. Fisher can be publicly humiliated and his career destroyed — if, in effect, he can be given the death penalty for a serious traffic violation — then the rest of the research community has legitimate cause for concern.”

###

Exactly!
Internet Report:

‘Scifrauders’ Rip Rife Dishonesty — Some Say: Burn Unethical Science!

We’ve been lurking around the Internet lately, reading postings on Scifraud. This bulletin board on dishonesty in science has 410 members.

Some scifrauders (a neologism we like, and plan to adopt) are institutional officials who investigate scientific misconduct; scifraud is their vocation.

Another group of members, including the bulletin board’s founder, sociologist Al C. Higgins, Ph.D., of the State University of New York in Albany, have a critical view of science and scientists as more or less dishonest.

"[T]he variety of dishonesties in science seems limitless," Higgins exclaimed in a Jan. 7 posting. "Moreover, the gambits are endlessly fascinating."

Is Scifraud an Oxymoron?

This division among scifrauders poses a conundrum: How to reconcile the belief that science is a valid, albeit sometimes defrauded endeavor, with the wider view on the board that science is fraud — as Higgins insists (See story, P. 6).

Explaining the board’s growing popularity, Higgins said in a recent phone interview from Albany that science fraud has become a "cult topic" that is of "great public interest," in part because of the huge federal outlays for science. Federal R&D costs $60 to $90 billion annually, he said. Half goes to 15 elitist universities.

"With this kind of structure," Higgins explained, "you’re just begging for abuse." The "unfavored" schools, he added, resent it when their lobbying for funds is called "pork-barrel science" by insiders at the federally favored schools.

An "awful lot" of the federal funds "get wasted," he said.

One recent sciftaud thread explored the definition of scifraud; it exposed the conflict between listers who respect science, but worry about fraud, and those who think science fraud is an oxymoron.

Higgins, in his Jan. 7 posting, declared:

[W]e’ve again reached a point at which some want a definition of what constitutes ‘fraud in science.’ Some members of this board want to talk only about this or that as constituting ‘fraud,’ or about this or that as being ‘in science.’ I will remind all [of you] of the extraordinary difficulties besetting government ever since it sought to formalize ‘fraud in science.’

Over the years, I have tried to keep Scifraud as broad as possible. I do not wish to limit its scope. When this board started, I had very little idea of what constituted ‘fraud in science,’ and the discussions over the past years have done little to clear up the matter.

Higgins went on to discuss the "limitless" varieties of dishonesty in science. A case in point: The U.S. government’s employment of German rocket scientist Werner von Braun in the space program "constitutes fraud to my mind" Higgins said.

This assertion raised some adrenaline out on the net. Two days later, microbiologist Orville G. Marti, Jr., of the Coastal Plains Experimental Station, in Tifton, Ga., responded:

"Just what was it that von Braun did that was fraudulent science? A U.S. government cover-up of his Nazi past was not science, and therefore cannot be scientific fraud. Your insistence that it be included smacks . . . of ax grinding. It suggests in fact that what you prefer to criticize is not so much fraudulent science as science itself."

Character Counts

Folklorist Kenneth D. Pimple, Ph.D., of the University of Indiana, jumped in on Higgins’ side. He wrote that he was "distressed" that the discussion of Nazi scientists had been focused "unstintingly" on whether their science was "‘good’ (e.g., accurate, ‘true’)." While "relevant," Pimple declared, "I would hope we would have some interest in the character of the scientists themselves [emphasis in the original]."

"Do we really," Pimple asked "want to promote the attitude that, ‘He may be a creep, he may sexually harass his male and female assistants, he may skim funds, he may be a racist and generally morally repugnant, but none of that matters because he sure does good science’ . . . ."

"Even if a given scientist does all kinds of creepy things but . . . ."

Only One Genetic Therapy

Approved by FDA in 1994

The discovery of an important human gene is announced almost every day. Many of these discoveries are rapidly leading to tests to diagnose genetic illness. These can be performed years in advance of the illnesses’ appearance, or in utero — or even in the silent, carrier state that allows them to be transmitted to offspring while the parents remain unaffected.

Treatments for genetic disease, and particularly genetic therapies for these and other illnesses are, however, lagging. The FDA announced last month that of the dozen or more genetic treatments submitted to the agency last year, only one has been approved as safe and effective. This drug is Reopro (Centocor); it prevents blood clots in heart patients.

The problem is not delays at FDA, as Republican critics of the agency charge. Reopro was approved within a year. Rather, seemingly promising genetically-engineered products — drugs to counteract severe infections (sepsis), for example — simply are not proving out in clinical trials.

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still does good science, it isn’t good for science (ask Rep.
Dingell), and it isn’t good to produce more of the same.”

Higgins, replying to Marti, wrote that science is an activity
“in which utterly unprincipled conduct is frequently required
for success. That, to me, is a fascinating way of looking at
science, but it does not mean I am anti-science.

“I just want to look at the fast footwork engaged in by the
hustlers . . . . That is my interest.” An ethicist, Tim C.
Mazur, M.B.A., of Santa Clara University, proposed:

“When a scientist accomplishes a scientific goal through
unethical means, that is wrong. It is more important for our
society to minimize unethical conduct than it is to have another
scientific goal achieved . . . .

“[S]ociety would be better served if we burned the results of
research by scientists who committed egregious ethical viola-
tions [to] . . . . underscore the point that behaving ethically is
more important than succeeding in science.”

To which Fred Spilhaus, Ph.D., of the American Geophysical
Union, in Washington, D.C., retorted: “And what fraction
continued on next page

Scifraud Founder Flunks Scihist

The Scifraud founder, sociologist Al Higgins, posted his credo last year; it is excerpted on the left below. At the right,
science historians whom we talked to examine his grasp of the facts.

“This board addresses the pretensions of scientists . . . . and
the gambits used for years in pretending that science fraud did
not exist. My complaint . . . is with Big Science which has been
pretending that science fraud does not exist. I’ve wanted to
expose Big Science’s pretensions and to understand the ‘devi-
ant scientist.’ My goal is to understand deviant behavior . . . .

“The gunman who robs a store and shoots a clerk with a
Saturday night special . . . . is of no interest to me. He’s just a
killer and probably stupid. On the other hand, the fact that
Newton, the great Isaac Newton, faked his way into the Royal
Society, hid his alchemical and historical Biblical studies and
became ‘the Great Scientist’ is of enormous interest.

“Newton, for example, though a Unitarian himself, pre-
tended for years to accept the Anglican affiliation — just so’s
he could keep his job at Trinity and, when other like believers
asked for his help, he refused. Real nice guy this. The pre-
tenses of the successful are my fare! . . . . I want to understand
the social process of being labelled a hero when, as can easily
be shown, the heroes in science, the giants of science, all had
feet of clay. They were all human — but that ain’t the story
that’s given out to the public . . . .

“We lie to students (remember I am a professor of soci-
ology) when we only provide them with the pieties. I had a
graduate student in psychology recently react astonished when I
told her of the lie told by the behaviorist [John B.] Watson who
fabricated the tale of Little Albert. She had been told that story
as an undergrad and here she was repeating it to her students . . . .
She thought she was telling her students the truth! . . .

“I want more and more people to be aware of fraud in
science. I want more and more students to be skeptical of the
knowledge they’re fed in the classroom and to search for them-
selves for where the truth lies. And perhaps I do celebrate on
coming across yet another case of fraud and fakery.

“I enjoy this work and, God knows, it is less trivial than some of
the number crunching done by colleagues in sociology . . . .

“I enjoy Scifraud precisely because the area is relatively
uncrowded and timidly heretical. E.A. Ross, a prominent
sociologist of earlier years in this century, used to say, . . . . ‘It’s
the job of every sociologist to raise hell.’ Well, this is my way
of living up to my professional obligations . . . .”

“Utter nonsense!” exclaimed Newton scholar I. Bernard
Cohen, Ph.D., by phone late last month when we read
him Higgins’ charge (left) that Newton faked his way
into the Royal Society. Science historian Cohen, of
Harvard, has written three books on Newton, including
The Newtonian Revolution (New York: Cambridge
University Press, 1983). He said Newton won his
membership by presenting the Society with a model of
the telescope he had invented, based on his discoveries
about light and color.

Cohen added, about Higgins’ “faker” charge: “Any-
one who knows anything about the subject would de-
clare you’re an idiot if you said that!”

Did Newton conceal his alchemical and Biblical stud-
ies? “No way,” said Cohen. “Nothing could be further
from the truth.” At that time, these studies were “a
legitimate thing to do.”

Did Newton hide his Unitarianism? “On the con-
trary!” Cohen responded. “He never had to pretend.
He simply was not examined on his religious beliefs.”

Watson, the founder of American behavioral psy-
chology, finished the Little Albert experiment in 1920.
In it, he purported to demonstrate that the child, who was
not afraid of a rat, could be conditioned with a negative
stimulus — a sudden, loud sound — to fear not only rats,
but also other fuzzy objects.

Higgins does not cite his source for the charge that
Watson “fabricated the tale.” However, a major reas-
essment of the experiment by psychology historian
Franz Samelson, Ph.D., of Kansas State University, ap-
peared in American Psychologist in June, 1980 — where
Higgins’ ex-student could have found it (vol. 35, pp.
619-25). Based on historical and archival material,
Samelson reports, “It is clear that the experiment was
conducted during . . . .” This would seem to refute Higgins.

Samelson quotes Watson as acknowledging that “the
work . . . . [5] in such an incomplete state that verified
conclusions are not possible. . . . [It is only] a preliminary
exposition of possibilities.” But that doesn’t make it a
“fabrication” — and Watson published his hedges.
Al Toffler's Futurism Is Scientific Dud

We're always pleased when the limelight shines on our writerly colleagues, and Al and Heidi Toffler are no exception. Newt Gingrich has invited the Tofflers into his intellectual entourage, along with the futurology that is their intellectual stock in trade.

How much can the Tofflers contribute to the current public discourse on America's future?

Since the future is invisible, there is no way to directly test — at least for awhile — the Tofflers' present prognostications. But time does fly! Al's first famous book, Future Shock (Random House) was published in 1970, fully a quarter century ago. That's as far back into the past as the year 2020 — a current futurist time mark — is ahead in the future. So, by checking the accuracy of Toffler's 1970 predictions, one can estimate the value of his current prognostications for Newt, Congress, the U.S. — and ourselves.

Change Roars Forward

Future Shock was not then, and is not now an easy read. It's not too technical. Quite the contrary! It's breathlessly pop in style. The writing is rushed, an expression perhaps of the rapidity of change that is Toffler's leitmotif. Here's a brief sample:

"The uneven, rocketing rates of change, the shifts and jerks in direction, compel us to ask whether the technosocieties, even comparatively small ones like Sweden and Belgium, have grown too complex, too fast to manage?"

Change, in Toffler's view, is the engine that drives individual lives, societies, and mankind — and change is speeding up, exponentially, faster and faster. That's Toffler's main message.

Technology and information are the instruments of change. In Toffler's apocalyptic vision, future shock, rampant change, will unravel unprepared minds and derail mankind — and the globe — unless conscious, effective planning can control and guide it.

Is it Bolshevism?

This prescription seems to us a little neo-bolshevik for an advisor to free-marketeer Newt. But then, the disciple need not always concur with his seer.

Toffler must have spent lots of time in airplanes and airports during Future Shock's germinative years, in the '60s. The technocratic universe he describes in the book is that of the business "jet setter," who then, as now, stays in touch by portable computer and other personal electronic devices. Toffler's future man is the one who writes a report, complete with colored bar graphs, in his seat, during a 52-minute plane flight, rather, say, than, taking a snooze or sipping a beer. The fictional O.J. Simpson, vaulting Hertz rental counters, epitomizes Toffler's futural American.

A small class of such technocrats did — and does — exist. But what is remarkable, in our uncomfortable "post modern" age, is how little they, or others, have been changed by change.

Scandal . . .

continued from page 4

their lives."

The NSABP's leadership "still is in question," they add, and "so are many of its future studies."

Inestimable damage has been done, the distinguished clinical statistician, Richard Peto, Ph.D., of Oxford, declared.

"[NSABP] is being destroyed, all in the name of morality," the Post-Gazette quotes him as saying. "They've destroyed research in the name of saving research."

Summing matters up, Carpenter and Twedt say:

• Fisher has never been accused of falsifying patient data.

• Poisson's frauds in Montreal have not changed the basic outcome of any NSABP study.

• There is no evidence of systematic fraud at any other NSABP institutions.

"Yet, in the end," the reporters conclude, "Fisher lost his career, and what may have been lifesaving research has been derailed or at least delayed."

They add:

"He desperately wants his reputation restored."

# # #

For Twedt and Carpenter and the Post-Gazette: Our congratulations! — D.R.Z.

Burn . . .

continued from preceding page

of the world's literature in other fields should we burn along with these tainted scientific results?"

Added Emre N. Yedidag, M.D., at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Ill., in response to Mazur:

"If you start burning things, especially written pieces of paper, you are on your way down a well-defined slippery slope.

"What kind of an academician would advocate burning any work? Display, mock, criticize, yes, but to burn?"

"Yes, next is Kristallnacht!"

But Pimple stood firm with Mazur:

"I think that burning fraudulent scientific findings might be more effective than burning literature and other works of art, because it is my impression that scientists are more interested in outcomes and applications — that is, having their work used — than artists are . . . ."

The next communiqué, two hours later, came from a poster named Drew Baker. He said, briefly:

"Please unsubscribe me."

# # #

Higgins had not, as of Probe's deadline, commented online on the science burning suggestion. Asked by phone to comment, he laughed, and said it is much more interesting to study fraudulent science than it would be to burn it.
Futurism . . .

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The starkest discovery of the post-Soviet, post-New Deal world really is how little things have changed — at least for the better. And: How tenaciously the old forces — religion, nationalism, greed, unconcern and hate — have hung on through a century of social experiments and changes.

Problems Remain

Change may be whizzing the world along. But it is a superficial, technological change that, contrary to Toffler’s predictions, has left most of the tough problems unsolved: War, sectarian hate, and poverty are just a few of them.

The problem with his futurist analysis, is that it is thoroughly ahistorical: Change drives change, but there is no human substrate. Toffler can’t — or doesn’t — predict real changes.

He’s operating in hyperspace. Nuclear proliferation isn’t in his index. Population explosion gets a passing nod. Toffler fails to predict Communism’s fall in Russia. Or America’s growing malaise. Or global warming, AIDS, or just about anything else that has shaped our recent times. He sees only change — and the ramifications he thinks it entails.

His prescription: “social futurism,” a sort of planning-based planning that governments and their governed must grow to accept. Because, they must!

Toffler’s prescription for the future thus is social planning — New Dealism at the very best.

The problem is, it hasn’t happened. What is more, it seems antithetical to the capitalized, self-actualized world in Newt’s future.

In short, we’re delighted by Al Toffler’s new place in the sun. But, based on the record, we don’t think he’s qualified to be either Newt’s or America’s Minister of Future Planning.

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