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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Dear NCB-ASM Member: The attention of your Executive Committee during the past two years has been directed mainly toward technical and organizational problems. The publication of a newsletter and the establishment of a functioning Program Committee were resultant administrative acts solving at least for the moment the problems of regular communication with local branch membership and the thoughtful planning of meetings. Other problems were considered and at least temporary steps were proposed and carried out. Two more problems remain at present unsolved: the creation of a Membership Committee and the rewriting of our constitution. We are now taking steps to work these matters out.

Besides the inevitable organizational readjustments which will be called for by the membership, there are matters of substance and other matters affecting the quality of our local branch which may now be considered. Two of these occur to me at this time. The first is the part which the local branch plays in the national affairs of the ASM. One national affair has recently come to my attention by chance. Let me quote from an article by Elinor Langer on "Chemical and Biological Warfare: The Research Program:"

"Additional intellectual assistance for Detrick comes from the American Society for Microbiology, which maintains a permanent Detrick advisory committee. In 1966 the President of ASM was Riley D. Housewright, scientific director of Fort Detrick."

The committee reported by Elinor Langer exists. In 1962 it was "Advisory to the Chief of the Chemical Corps." In 1964 it was "Advisory to the Chemical-Biological-Radiological Agency of the U.S. Army." And in 1966 it was "Advisory to the U.S. Army Biological Laboratories." I am told that the committee was begun about 1942 and that, therefore, the ASM involvement in biological warfare is long standing. The role of the ASM seems clear in this matter since the constitution provides that the ASM will "stimulate scientific investigations and their applications." There are many questions which require clarification, however. For example, how much basic and specialized knowledge in microbiology is of importance in biological warfare? Are all of us aiding in the development of weapons by being microbiologists? Is present biological warfare capability as massive as present atomic warfare capability? If not, could it be? Who determines the direction which biological weapons development takes and who determines the grounds for use of biological weapons? Does the existence of an ASM advisory committee to the Army Biological Laboratories imply a moral commitment of the ASM to the precepts of biological warfare or a directive influence of the ASM in the development of weapons?

The ASM may have a long-standing policy on biological warfare. What position will our local branch take on this policy? It is about time we became informed on the subject of biological warfare, if only to take a conscious part in the "advisory" activity of the ASM. For a start I recommend the two articles by Elinor Langer in the January 13, 1967 and the January 20, 1967 issues of Science. To supplement that I suggest we have a local branch meeting soon to consider the questions above and to hear from our national leadership.

The second matter for consideration is the quality of our meetings. The Program Committee can determine subjects to be covered, the time and place of the meetings, and other administrative matters, but the quality of the meeting is largely up to the participants. Traditionally, both at national and at local branch meetings short "papers" are presented. Generally these papers are ten minutes in length followed by five minutes for discussion. Recently the efficacy of these papers has been questioned. One of our members had suggested that at national meetings the papers be three minutes long. For local branch meetings opinion differs from the radical, who would eliminate them from our meetings to the conservative, who prefers the papers as they have been. I hope that in the coming months we may discuss this matter, perhaps determining the purposes, if any, to be served by the papers. Experiments with the format and presentation of the papers will be especially helpful in illuminating these purposes.

Certainly one area of dispute will center around the aptness of the term "paper" for these presentations. In an article on "The Art of Talking About Science" (Science, December 30, 1966, p. 1613), Lawrence Bragg distinguishes between a "talk" and a "paper" by pointing out that a talk's primary object "is to create a state of mind, or point of view, not to convey information." To this end, Bragg goes on, a talk must differ both in style and content from a paper. For our local branch meetings this difference must transcend the obvious oral vs. written difference because our talks are presented to what amounts to a general audience and hence must differ also from talks appropriately delivered to specialists. I urge those who may present talks before our local branch in the future to read Bragg's article and to bring your opinions on it to my attention.

Sincerely yours,

Alvin J. Clark, President, NCB-ASM

DR. JACOB FONG

The colleagues, friends and students of Dr. Jacob Fong wish to express their feelings of sadness and loss as a result of his death on Tuesday, February 28, after an extended illness. Dr. Fong was born on October 29, 1913 in Canton, China, received his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California in 1944, and was Chairman of the Department of Bacteriology, University of California, Berkeley, from 1963 to 1965. His research covered fields of microbial and viral pathogenicity, problems of viral replication, and role of cells in immunity against microbes, tissue transplants and tumors. He was a member of ASM and had recently been nominated as Councilman at Large for the American Academy of Microbiology. We shall miss his productive and serious contributions to research, his kindly and considerate attitude toward students, and his thoughtful and stimulating lectures.

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