

## Editorial

### *The real science frauds*

In 1986 a group of biologists was accused of fraud. Among those who came under attack at that time was Nobel Laureate David Baltimore, who has now been appointed president of Rockefeller University. The issue involved whether or not certain data had been fudged in a published research report, although the findings of the paper itself have never been challenged.

One-third of the faculty of Rockefeller University has come out in the press opposing Baltimore's appointment. While the commission of a fraud would by no means be a recommendation for such an appointment, it seems to us that in this instance not only was Dr. Baltimore not complicit in a fraud, but also that to label the publication of incorrect data a criminal act would be to set a very dangerous precedent.

Moreover, on the scale of scientific malpractice, we would place the deliberate suppression of the truth about the extent of the present AIDS crisis as far more reprehensible and dangerous. We would also place hoaxes such as that fabricated around the "ozone hole" in the same category.

The controversial paper was not even done in Baltimore's laboratory (his name appears on the paper because one of the students whom he supervised, worked on the overall project it reported upon.) The accusation about the data was originally brought by a postdoctoral student, Dr. Margot O'Toole.

Peer review substantiated the particulars of Dr. O'Toole's charge, but allowance was made for the fact that later experimental evidence amply substantiated the contentions of the paper. There matters would have stood, were it not for the intervention of an employee of the National Institutes of Health, Walter W. Stewart, who fancied himself a whistle-blower. He learned of the case and vigorously pursued it. Ultimately, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, Stewart enlisted Rep. John Dingell's (D-Mich.) House Energy and Commerce Committee to hold hearings on the case in the spring of 1988.

The presumptions underlying the Dingell hearing would have been the entering wedge for a series of

scandals against scientists. They were modeled upon the infamous "Pentagate" proceedings which have done a lot to close down much-needed research and development work in the defense sector. Fortunately, and in large measure because of Dr. Baltimore's spirited counterattack on the arrogance of laymen presuming to judge the motives of a scientist whose work they did not understand, that appeared to end the matter.

Now the case apparently is being reopened. We would urge those who are genuinely concerned with the issue of scientific fraud, to investigate instead the systematic coverup by the National Institutes of Health and other government agencies, on the increasing danger of the AIDS epidemic. As we have reported, it is now for the first time being admitted that in some places in Africa as many as one in four people are infected with the disease. Similar statistics are being found among the homeless in U.S. cities. For years Lyndon LaRouche and his associates have been predicting, virtually alone, that with sufficient density of infection, the disease can be transmitted by insects and by aerosol means. This was the basis for the two defeated referenda in California which asked that public health measures be taken.

The LaRouche proposals were greeted by hysteria by the NIH, and attacked as panic-mongering. Other people have gotten the same treatment. Several manufacturers of aerosol sprays who advertised their product as killing the AIDS virus, have been ordered to withdraw the advertising by the Environmental Protection Agency. The reason given is not that the advertising is misleading or untrue—but that it would expose the government coverup of the dangers of "casual" transmission.

The chief of the Environmental Protection Agency's antimicrobial program branch, Juanita Wills, explained that the EPA "doesn't want people to start thinking, 'The government and doctors have been lying, and I really can get AIDS from that table.'" Surely this is an incident of deliberate fraud which Congressman Dingell might well investigate!