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INAUGURATION DAY

Three years ago this month, *Nature* published the first issue of its new industrial journal, *Bio/Technology*. This issue, then, marks our leather anniversary, the inauguration of the journal's second Scientific Advisory Board, and the first report from our first scientific conference.

This is a fitting season for such beginnings. March 25 was New Year's Day for the Western world until the 1580s (or the 1750s among English-speakers). The United States kept the first week in March for presidential inaugurations until 1933. Today, inaugurations are occasions for speeches and ceremonies. It is the custom to look inward and forward, to our own highest abilities and best intentions. Not—as the first augurs did by haruspicy, osteomancy, and hepatoscopy—into the bodies of sacrificed victims, to divine the portents of fate.

In a forward looking spirit, then, we are most pleased to welcome four new members to our Scientific Advisory Board: Ernest Jaworski of Monsanto, Carl-Gustaf Rosen of Alfa-Laval AB, Lemuel Wingard of the University of Pittsburgh, and Carlo Croce of the Wistar Institute.

This is the opportune time, too, to thank all of our charter Board members for their help in establishing *Bio/Technology* as a credible medium of scientific exchange. Our special thanks go to departing Board members Leonard Herzenberg, Larry McKay, and Shuichi Suzuki. And we welcome returning members Mary-Dell Chilton, Arnold Demain, Stanley Falkow, David Goeddel, Benjamin Hall, Ephraim Katchalski-Katzir, Malcolm Lilly, David Mount, Yukio Sugino, past chairman Allen Laskin, and our new Board chairman, George Poste.

As it happened, *Bio/Technology's* first conference convened on the date now set aside for American presidential inaugurations, and one of the conference's high points, we think, was Dr. Poste's inaugural address, "Biopharmaceuticals: Opportunities and Challenges in a Changing Health Care Environment". We hope to publish the talk soon, but some of his points deserve special emphasis now—and tomorrow, and the day after.

We, in the safety and comfort our high technology gives us, must not and cannot abandon the world's desperate, diseased, poor, and hungry. These themes should be familiar to our readers; Dr. Poste has put them forward many times in these pages. (*Bio/Technology* 3:704, Aug. '85, and 2:1096, Dec. '84). Technology may be a tool that helps us build global solutions, but it is not the solution itself. New vaccines do little good without the roads to carry them or refrigerators in which to store them. Drugs matter little if there is no food to sustain the cured. Western high-cost, high-energy, ultra-high-yield agriculture does not fit into developing economies. Decent drinking water is beyond the reach of many. And closer to home, unproven and too-soon-trumpeted cancer "cures" merely torture the desperately ill and their families.

Yes, the technical barriers to world health and freedom from want are formidable, but progress is measurable. The political, social, and economic barriers are higher and slower to yield. (According to one epidemiological model, for example, controlling some tropical diseases will require 99 percent immunization of hard-to-reach populations. In his talk, Dr. Poste touched on aerosol vaccines. Over lunch, wearied by recounting the practical and political obstacles to conventional immunization programs, he suggested that delivering the vaccines via low-flying aircraft might be the only technically feasible—if perhaps ethically unpalatable—approach.)

At this point, the glib editorialist springs a simple three-point program guaranteed to end the abuse of publicity at home and elemental suffering abroad. We have no such answers. As John F. Kennedy said when pledging his country to a race for the moon, this is a task we should undertake not because it is easy, but because it is hard. It will take more and better heads than ours.

The undertaking is in the spirit of the times, though. One-time makers of napalm and defoliants sell themselves on TV as idealists dedicated to saving babies and the Green Revolution. Biotechnology is clearly implied. But only when such representations take on substance, become policy instead of p.r., will we have a chance.

—Douglas McCormick