

correspondence

International transfers

SIR,—The following document is communicated for publication on behalf of the 52 Fellows of the Royal Society whose signatures appear below. No doubt other members of the scientific community in this country and throughout the world will wish to affirm their support for the same principles. Those who share our concern about these matters may wish to know that a Study Group on Scholarly Freedom and Human Rights has been established by the Council for Science and Society (3/4 St Andrews Hill, London EC4V 5BY) to give further consideration to the issues involved. It would be particularly valuable to the work of the Study Group to have further detailed information or well informed opinion from any of your readers.

Yours faithfully,

J. M. ZIMAN

and M. F. ATIYAH, C. H. ANDREWES, C. AUERBACH, J. F. ADAMS, J. G. BOLTON, J. BADDILEY, K. G. BUDDEN, C. A. CLARKE, S. CURRAN, R. E. DAVIES, F. DANTON, C. D. DARLINGTON, K. G. DENBIGH, L. ESSEN, C. A. FLEMING, G. FRYER, G. HERZBERG, W. HUDSON, A. HADDOW (deceased), J. T. HOUGHTON, J. H. HUMPHREY, W. K. HAYMAN, A. KLUG, A. KELLY, H. KORNBERG, O. A. KERENSKY, B. LOCKSPEISER, L. F. LA COUR, H. LIPSON, J. D. MCGEE, E. H. MANSFIELD, J. MANDELSTAM, K. MAHLER, A. NEUBERGER, J. NEEDHAM, L. E. ORGEL, A. G. OGSTON, M. R. POLLOCK, J. W. PRINGLE, W. S. PEART, G. ROCHESTER, A. ROBERTSON, R. A. RAPHAEL, N. SHEPPARD, G. SERIES, M. SEATON, M. SWANN, M. SZWARC, R. WHITAM, M. WILKINS, F. YOUNG.

The following statement is proposed for consideration and adoption by learned societies, academies, governmental bodies and private corporations involved in the practical arrangements for the international transfer of scientific information by written communication and by personal travel. Although not intended to be legally binding, this statement indicates the basic principles by which we consider that particular agreements and actions in this sphere ought to be judged.

International Scientific Communication

The claim of scientific knowledge to universal validity can only be tested and maintained by international intercourse between scientists. All nations which make use of scientific knowledge benefit by the rapid diffusion of information about new discoveries, and by the submission of new ideas to the widest circle of competent critics. The free exchange of knowledge and ideas is fundamental to the health and vitality of science as an enterprise of all mankind.

The individuals and corporate bodies who benefit directly from this intercourse

should be bound by certain common courtesies and mutual obligations. Although these courtesies and obligations are normally taken for granted, their neglect or violation can cause much ill will and damage to science as a whole. We therefore believe that there is value in stating the following general principles, which are based upon the experience of communities in which science has flourished in many different historical and political circumstances.

A. Written Communications

1. The published literature of science should be free to circulate, without hindrance or censorship, within and between nations.
2. All efforts should be made to ensure that relevant scientific information published in any one country be made available, as rapidly as possible, in the most convenient form, to scientists and to scientific institutions in all other countries.
3. The originality of published scientific work should be respected throughout the world by fair practices of citation or other attribution.
4. The legal rights of authors and publishers of scientific journals and books should be protected under the International Copyright Agreement.
5. All national scientific communities should contribute to the financial support and management of international facilities for the transfer of scientific information such as abstracting and indexing services.

B. Individual Travel

1. Scientists acknowledged by their colleagues as experts should be free to travel within and between different countries for the exchange of unclassified scientific information.
2. Acknowledged scientific experts making such visits should be given intellectual hospitality in the form of access to open research institutions and to individual scholars.
3. The services of scientific experts from all countries should be made available to assist in the activities of the international scientific agencies.
4. Bilateral financial and administrative arrangements for the exchange of scientists between two countries should not be regarded as excluding or limiting visits arranged by other means.

C. Conferences

1. The appropriate national scientific organisations should be encouraged to participate in open international scientific conferences by facilitating the attendance of well-qualified scientific experts in the relevant subjects.
2. All countries should endeavour to contribute to the material facilities for international scientific conferences by way of hospitality and financial support.
3. Every bona fide participant in an international scientific conference should be accorded freedom of entry to the meeting place of that conference.
4. The expert authority of properly constituted international committees of scientists should be respected in such matters as the choice of participants and speakers at international scientific conferences.

Genetics at the OU

SIR,—The article by Professor Steven Rose on the new genetics course offered to Open University students (*Nature*, 259, 437; 1976) is misleading. In particular, it does not refer to the existence of a Consultative Committee, of which we are members, appointed by the Nuffield Foundation to advise on the development of the course, and to the sharp disagreement between that committee and Professor Rose about the suitability of the materials now being distributed for use by students at large but also by Open University students.

The Joint University Genetics Course was launched in 1973 with a grant of £20,000 from the Nuffield Foundation with the objective not merely of developing an outstanding course in genetics but also of proving a mechanism by which the Open University and other universities might collaborate in the development of educational materials. At the same time the Foundation appointed a Consultative Committee to advise the course team on academic matters and to advise the Foundation on the progress of the work. Apart from members of the course team, the committee included Professor D. Lewis (University College, London) as chairman of the committee, Professor W. Bodmer (University of Oxford), Professor J. Jinks (University of Birmingham), Professor D. Jones (University of Hull), Dr H. Kacser (University of Edinburgh), Professor R. H. Pritchard (University of Leicester) and Professor J. Sang (University of Sussex). In March 1974 the total amount of the grant from the Nuffield Foundation was increased to £88,000.

At the end of 1975, nearly three months before Professor Rose's article appeared, the committee informed the Nuffield Foundation that it was dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous three years' work and asked that the course should not be published, or even used by Open University students, without further consideration, restructuring and amendment. The Nuffield Foundation has informed the Open University of the committee's discontent but no agreement has yet been reached between the Foundation and the University.

The length and depth of the course was thought to be far beyond the capacities of the intended students. The Open University states that the study