

Responsibility of scientists

SIR—Jamie Love (*Nature* 335, 758; 1988) asks that the scientific community organize to find constructive development in science, rather than wasting time and money in armament research.

Fortunately, some steps have already been taken. Pugwash is an organization of scientists that has been working for peaceful development since 1957. Recently, the Global Challenge Network was set up by Professor H.-P. Dürr (Munich). In 1986, the first international scientists' peace meeting was held in Hamburg, where the 'Hamburg proposals for disarmament' were announced. This year, the second international scientists' meeting 'From nuclear threat to mutual security' is being held from 2 to 4 December at Imperial College, London.

I should also mention national organizations such as the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) in the United States, Scientists against Nuclear Arms (SANA) in England and the natural scientists' organization Verantwortung für den Frieden (Responsibility for Peace), founded by West German scientists last spring.

All these activities are based on the

conviction that we, as scientists, should no longer let ourselves be used to develop means of mass destruction, no matter whether these are nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

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SIR—Jamie Love seems not to have heard of Clausewitz's famed and sensible comment about war being a continuation of diplomacy by other means. As a result he has ended up putting the chariot before the horse.

War and the preparation for war cannot exist in the absence of some form of political or ideological conflict. It is only in the context of this conflict that armed forces are justified. These armed forces are required to meet the threat posed by the perceived enemy. Advantage is always sought and this leads, in the style of the Red Queen's race, to the development of newer weapons. The military spending that does this does not take place in a vacuum but only with the approval of a civilian government. It is the civilian gov-

ernment that defines the political stance of the nation and so defines any conflicts that the nation may have. Trying to stop the development of new weapons, or to slow the arms race, by appealing to those who design the weapons to stop it, does not address the underlying problems.

Disarmament in the absence of political resolution of a conflict has never prevented war. The best that can be said for it is that it has made subjugation less bloody. In the case of the Second World War, the failure to re-arm in good time (a logical equivalent of active disarmament) actually accelerated the outbreak of war. The German general staff had not planned to begin hostilities until some time around 1942–43. Similarly, technically superior artillery allowed the Prussians to go to war and win short, sharp victories against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and France. On the other hand, the Japanese managed to eliminate firearms from their culture in the seventeenth century. It did not stop them fighting, it just made the killing a little more difficult. The Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty shows a measure of disarmament as a result of a political agreement. Even so, it looks a lot better than it is.

When there are no more unresolved territorial claims, when the mistakes of our forefathers are put right, when the wronged have justice, when there are no more have-nots, when there are no more oppressed people, then the underlying problems will be solved. Only when such a world has been built will we be able to stop building weapons. This is the great challenge. There is no place in it for rhetorical short cuts.

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SIR—Jamie Love does a great service in once more highlighting the dependence on scientists of those who wage war. Unfortunately, so long as military institutions exist, one can be sure that scientists will work for them, and their dismantling is a matter for other scientists only as individual parts of broader political movements. However, the penetration of the military into ostensibly academic institutions is also extensive and represents to many an unwelcome presence which sours their whole working environment. A useful exercise in scientific consciousness-raising and moral assertiveness could be performed if enough concerned scientists were willing publicly to forgo funds from military sources, however innocuous sounding, and to reject collaboration with those who do. If this could evolve into a high-profile mutually supportive network, so much the better.

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Disciplinary matter

SIR—J. Philippe Rushton (*Nature* 335, 8; 1988) may be right in his assertion that there is "widespread belief that there is no genetic basis by which people differ in important ways", but how that misconception results in the conclusion that "discipline and punishment are counterproductive" is at best a *non sequitur* and more likely a contradiction. If sociobiology is to live up to its own promissory notes, it will have to expunge infiltrators from the Dark Side.

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Confusion in the lab

SIR—Those involved in running laboratories or working in them should be aware of the problems that could arise if the British Standards Institution (BSI) presses on with its revised standard for fume cupboards. Since 1982, they have been graded by a containment test, but BSI has now reverted to a test based on velocity.

The containment method provides better operator safety, and also provides scope for design development that may lead to technical innovation. At the same time, regulations for users due to be pub-

lished next year (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 198-) for users call for tests of containment ability.

West Germany has a new standard based on the 1982 BSI draft, and in the Netherlands, after an investigation by the Dutch Institute for Environmental Hygiene and Health, there is now a specification for a 'standard product' based on containment rather than velocity.

Other manufacturers as well as users share my disappointment at the revised draft — and should we not in any case be aiming at a common standard with our European partners?

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Jenner request

SIR—I am doing research for a new biography of Edward Jenner based in part on papers held by the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. Not only are these letters and diaries unused by previous twentieth-century biographers, but they were unknown to Jenner's original biographer, his student and friend, John Baron. I will be grateful for any advice from or documents held by Jenner descendants or enthusiasts.

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