

/CORRESPONDENCE

Comments and opinions on editorials, articles, and research in **BIO/TECHNOLOGY** are welcome. Letters to the editor may be addressed to: 345 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10010 U.S. Tel: 1-212-726-9294. Fax: 1-212-696-9635. e-mail: s.hassler@natureny.com.

Science and science journals To the editor:

During my recent visit to several institutes of the Chinese Academy of Science and Academy of Agricultural Services, and two leading universities in the People's Republic of China, I learned firsthand what Bernard Dixon illustrated on scientific publishing in the developing world (*Bio/Technology* 13:928).

For example, one laboratory successfully developed a procedure for gene transformation of monocots more than a year before a similar protocol was published in the West. For the reason that was mentioned by Dixon, they published their results in Chinese, hoping to benefit the Chinese scientific community. Although they published first, I seriously doubt that they will ever be credited as the first to develop the technique. These types of mistakes should not happen, and would not happen if the world scientific community believed that there should not be borders within science.

First, all significant scientific findings belong to the whole world, not just one country. It is right to think about bringing the new technique quickly to the people in your own country. However, we should not forget that the same technique is most likely as beneficial for the people in

other countries. It is especially true for the economically developing world.

Second, we should think that the "high-impact" journals also belong to the world scientific community. As correctly stated by Dixon, English is the language of science. Obviously, journals published in languages other than English limit the submission of papers from other countries, thus limiting their impact on the whole scientific community. If those prestigious journals only accepted papers from their own countries, they would not have become high-impact to begin with.

Finally, the concern that one country's journal is impoverished by a lack of excellent papers is understandable but not necessary. Many journals in developing countries can still increase their impact and serve their own people well by including English abstracts and/or "digest" sections that summarize recent papers of interest in the primary journals (some journals are already doing so).

We should encourage scientists of developing countries to publish their results in the interna-

tional journals. Meanwhile, it is a scientist's duty to quickly introduce the new technique to the people in his/her own country through various communications (meeting presentations, sending preprints to colleagues, etc.).

Ling Yuan
Calgene, Inc
1929 Fifth Street
Davis, CA 95616

Bridge to nowhere?

To the editor:

In a special section on regional development (*Bio/Technology* 13:763-64), Sinja Sveinsdottir envisions a bright future ("Medicon Valley") for the biotechnology industry in the Øresund area following the construction of a bridge between Sweden and Denmark. Working as scientists in the Copenhagen area, these prospects immediately caught our attention: new exciting job opportunities?

Unfortunately, arguments as to why a three billion dollar bridge should lead to the development of a "biotech powerhouse" are almost entirely absent from the article. According to Sveinsdottir, representatives from the biotech industry in the area believe that closer contact (i.e., the bridge) will "benefit the region as a whole," and that "the separate regions of southern Sweden and the Copenhagen area of Denmark individually may not have sufficient critical mass to thrive as an area of biotechnological excellence." However, such diffuse statements hardly qualify as arguments.

In our opinion the article fails to explore the critical questions: (1) What factors are limiting the development of biotechnology in the area now? (2) Is it likely that the existence of a bridge will remove some of these limiting factors?

Lars Landbo and Thomas R. Mikkelsen
Plants Genetic Section
Risø National Laboratory
DK-4000 Roskilde, Denmark

Three reviewer rule

To the editor:

The contribution by David Goodstein (*Bio/Technology* 13:618) raised the issue that "eminent" people in a particular field of science may use their positions in order to maintain their eminence, especially during times of funding shortfalls. He points out that this is only human, and they cannot be expected not to do this.

This situation is particularly dangerous in light of the fact that more and more journals are moving to a single reviewer or single negative review justifies rejection policy. Since the single reviewer is almost always someone very eminent in the

IMAGE
UNAVAILABLE
FOR COPYRIGHT
REASONS

"Your roaches
are history. . .
and I took the
liberty of getting
rid of all those
rats you had in
the basement."