

December 9, 2003

Dr. John H. Marburger III
Director
Office of Science & Tech. Policy
Old Executive Office Building
17th & PA Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Dr. Marburger:

It is a changing, uncertain, and sometimes dangerous world. And these are exactly the kind of circumstances when we need social science to assess reality and be sure that we have an independent capacity to update our images and understanding about how the economy is changing and the world beyond our borders.

The nation cannot afford to rely upon these two institutions for effective planning. The institutional problems are extensive and similar to the breakdowns associated with the destruction of the space shuttle Challenger. There is not a great deal of innocence left, and they are unlikely to be self-correcting.

Sincerely,

(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

[Attachments:

Letters to Dr. Washington 12/2/2003 and Dr. Alberts 12/7/2003 requesting termination and recusal.]

December 7, 2003

Dr. Bruce M. Alberts - President
National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council
500 Fifth St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Dr. Alberts:

I enclose a copy of recent correspondence with Senator John McCain bearing upon scientific deficiencies and a failure of public trust by the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council.

You already may have seen the background material referenced in the letter (e.g, the scientific criticisms affirmed in the letter from Dr. Robert Reischauer, the Executive Branch's demotion of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the public judgment of the unacceptable and serious scientific deficiencies of economics by Dr. Lee Bollinger, President of Columbia University).¹ They are prima facie evidence of an alarming pattern of self-serving, scientific misconduct and negligence in the work of the NAS/NRC; and of coverups that have damaged the country.

I am writing to petition, formally, you and other officers and members of the NAS Council and the Governing Board of the National Research Council to recuse yourselves from all further actions and discussions related to these breakdowns of scientific integrity. To permit democratic processes to operate freely, I also request that this group, and all members of the NAS involved in the committees and reports that are implicated in the NAS/NRC "sins of omission and commission" (to use the phrase of the late Ernest Hilgard)², permanently recuse themselves from all future decisions involving election to the National Academy of Sciences or other NSF/NAS/NRC or academic world outcomes affecting scientists who participate in public discussions of these system breakdowns, apparent wrongdoing, and institutional remedies.

As you know, these national problems of deficient scientific advice and eroding capacity began under Dr. Frank Press, when he and other officials implicated in early wrongdoing failed to recuse themselves. They used the power of their offices, and the prestige of the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council, to

defend themselves and block the self-correction processes of science.³ Thus they caused additional, future damage to the nation and to the due process rights of scientists (especially, younger scientists) who want new data systems to test innovative, competing - and possibly better - ideas.

Would you be kind enough to ask your General Counsel to provide a written pledge of these recusals?

Sincerely,

(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

cc: Senator John McCain
Office of NAS/NRC General Counsel
Mr. Lawrence Rudolph, NSF General Counsel

1. Copies are available on the www.policyscience.net Website. Copies of earlier correspondence (e.g., concerning unmeasured and uncontrolled variables and the failure of the 53 leading mathematical models for macroeconomic behavior, forecasting government revenue, etc.) also are available on the Website.
2. In the early - and still secret - internal debate and coverup decision.
3. As you know, the NAS/NRC governance system also ignored earlier private warnings about breakdowns of scientific integrity - and the NAS/NRC obligations to provide the best scientific advice to the public concerning progress in the behavioral sciences - by the Carnegie Commission for Science, Technology, and Government; by President Jack Peltason of the University of California system; and others. I am not aware of evidence that the NAS Council or NRC Governing Council told the members of the NAS about these warnings.

[Policy Science letterhead]
December 2, 2003

Dr. Warren Washington, Chair
National Science Board - National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Washington:

I am writing to request that the National Science Board direct Dr. Rita Colwell and NSF to terminate all contracts for behavioral science advice with the National Research Council.

I enclose copies of letters of December 2, 2003 to Chairman McCain and Chairman Boehlert of the Senate and House NSF oversight committees. I will not recapitulate correspondence with the National Science Board that presents the background to this request and tried, as best as I could, to raise an alarm and prevent the recent damage to the country. However, may I draw your attention to the enclosed Op Ed pieces (e.g., President Lee Bollinger of Columbia; and the discussion of the demoted status of the Council of Economic Advisers) and the earlier letter from Dr. Robert Reischauer?

You might wish to contrast the scientific candor of President Bollinger and Dr. Reischauer with the recent Presidential address by Dr. Bruce Alberts, available on the www.nas.edu Website. Dr. Alberts writes a fine speech and quotes Albert Einstein, "Many people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: It is character."¹ But he makes egregious and false claims that the reports of his organization "are based on the best science" and represent a scientific consensus of our best scientists.² I am prepared to believe that he is accurate about the physical sciences but he is lying about economics - and has been for years.

It should not be the business of the National Science Board to become involved in sympathetic imaginings about academic behavior, or why the

internal problems of the National Academy of Sciences have brought us to this point, or to continue behavioral science contracts because 90% of NSF/NRC contracts, in other areas, may be reliable. Just as in cases of medical malpractice, or negligence in the destruction of the space shuttle Columbia, the National Science Board's public role is assign accountability, replace personnel, cancel contracts, invoke penalties, and send messages to the NAS/NRC and a wider scientific and university world about the management and scientific standards the American people have a right to expect.

I am alarmed and deeply concerned that an academic science Establishment has captured too many government agencies. The "we do not criticize our colleagues" norm is chilling when joined to government power. Stagnant macroeconomics research may only be the tip of the iceberg, the most prominent example of how a web of collegial, status, and power relationships, imported from the world of academic science, has led to misuse of government power and blocked needed corrective action, in the public interest, that would disrupt such relations.

Thus, by this letter, I formally request that members of the National Science Board, who also are members of the National Academy of Sciences or who have other conflicts of interest, acknowledge these conflicting interests and relationships and recuse themselves from the cancellation decision.

- Suppose that a lower-status contractor, responsible for fast discovery national cancer research, produced the same egregious intellectual failures and damage to patients as Dr. Alberts et al. have produced for economics research and policy? And an examination of the records showed that they had killed relevant statistical controls (e.g., equivalent to not washing test tubes) for research and field trials. That senior researchers had systematically derailed new, promising, and competing lines of research by younger researchers that might have falsified or replaced their own, older theories? And had made false claims that their work represented a "best science" consensus and representation of all views?

Under these conditions, I think the National Science Board would vote "no confidence" in the contractor.

By copies of this letter I will bring this request for immediate cancellation and recusal, and concern about your conflicts of interest, to the attention of Senator McCain and Representative Boehlert; and I would urge that all members of the National Science Board with dual membership receive the advice of counsel. The National Academy of Sciences is a self-governing organization and

members of the National Science Board with dual membership have known about the serious and uncorrected deficiencies in the performance of Dr. Alberts et al. for several years and may have been negligent.

Sincerely,

(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

cc: Senator John McCain
Representative Boehlert
Dr. Rita Colwell, NSF Director
Mr. Lawrence Rudolph, NSF General Counsel

1. Quoted in: "Maintaining Standards for Scientific Excellence and Conduct," section in Bruce Alberts, "Harnessing Science for a More Rational World." Presidential Address 2003. April 28, 2003.

2. Op. cit., section on "The National Academies." In America, there are accepted standards for the recall of unreliable products and drugs, and expectations of published correction of scientific journal articles that are found to contain errors, but Dr. Alberts's lower standard is to stonewall. Had Dr. Alberts et al. candidly admitted and corrected their problems of NAS/NRC-suppressed data and scientific competition in the behavioral sciences many years ago, the magnitude of the current breakdowns and economic damage to our country might have been avoided.