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The Payoff

Last December 10, Dr. W. D. McElroy, Director of the National Science Foundation, wrote to Art Conn as President of the Institute and requested his help in identifying 'the payoff of basic scientific research.' The letter, in full, is given below:

One problem all of us in science have struggled with over the years is the demonstration by case of the payoff of basic scientific research. Every government science administrator has had the problem, and it is one which is likely to continue, especially since basic research depends so heavily upon public funds.

In short, the federal investment in scientific research must continuously and properly be justified. You are in a position to help.

We need assistance in identifying examples of how basic research has contributed to the solution of problems facing society, how such research has produced the knowledge by which man has improved his condition, and how knowledge of himself and his surroundings has enabled man to learn to live more productively.

I feel the heads of professional scientific societies are in a unique position to help identify examples of the value of basic research. We would like to have any suggestions you may offer within your discipline or sphere of experience, or any general observations you may wish to offer.

We can best show our appreciation of your response by making constructive use of your contribution. I shall appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Those of us associated with *AIChE Journal*, as an official Institute publication in the research area, feel that this letter raises an important issue and that the Institute's reply deserves publication.

Many Institute members helped President Joe Martin frame his reply, but particular credit should be given to members of the Research Committee. The letter, without appendices, is printed on pages i to iii of this issue.

We think the reply was carefully prepared and reflects favorably on our research in chemical engineering. We would be interested in receiving letters from our readers commenting on this assessment of the *payoff of basic scientific research*.

ROBERT C. REID