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— The Editor comments —

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL

In recent months a sister organization in the field of the biological sciences found itself in very serious difficulty because of certain fiscal irregularities which had occurred in its administration of sizeable grants awarded by the National Science Foundation. The organization involved has subsequently taken heroic measures to raise sufficient funds to reimburse the NSF for the entire sum of over a quarter of a million dollars which allegedly has been misused.

Almost simultaneously, Congressional investigators have brought to light several incidents in which funds provided under the National Institutes of Health grants program have been employed for the purchase of unauthorized equipment or in which budgets have been adjusted internally to allocate disproportionately for administrative or overhead costs.

Several features common to the cases involving both the NSF grants and the NIH grants appear to deserve some comment.

In the first place, in none of these disclosures was there any evidence of purely personal gain involved in the misdirection of funds; on the contrary, all evidence brought to light indicated that the irregularities were entirely motivated by unrestrained scientific zeal. Those entrusted with administering the grants made certain improper compromises in an effort to achieve more rapidly the desired goals of the specific study, or to expedite other phases of their general program of research activities.

Secondly, the overall effect of these disclosures has been to raise doubts in the minds of both Congress and the public as to the fiscal awareness and sense of responsibility which might be expected either from individual scientists or the scientific community. On this point Dr. James D. Ebert, director of the embryology department of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, has stated: "*Our lofty ideals, our high purpose in the laboratory and classroom, have not always been carried over in our day to day business practice; we have been more concerned with the advancement of our own fields than with safeguarding the public interest.*"

Clearly, it is the individual responsibility of each grant recipient to exercise all diligence in the management of the funds entrusted to him by his fellow citizens through government agencies or private foundations. Scientists need to recognize that in financial matters attentiveness to details and accuracy must be exercised comparable to that employed in reporting on research experiments.

*Edward G. Feldmann*

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