

**Maintaining NAS-NRC Credibility:  
A Reply**

The editorial in your August issue, "Maintaining NAS-NRC Credibility," leaves the mistaken impression that the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council has no system for protecting against the introduction of bias in its studies. You then go on to endorse a system that would identify experts' biases and then balance those when a committee is appointed by finding "the right mix of people." That is precisely the system that the NAS-NRC has been using for many years.

Our system is designed to protect against both the reality and the appearance of bias, but it failed to eliminate the appearance of bias within the Food and Nutrition Board recently because of a previously unrecognized gap in our procedures. I remain convinced that appearances, and only appearances, have been offended in this instance. Even fellow scientists who have disagreed with the Board's recommendations in "Toward Healthful Diets" have not found the Board's work or its assessment unsound or unscientific; all agree that the available evidence is inconclusive. The scientific disagreement has turned not on the evidence but on what advice to offer the public at large under these shaky circumstances.

The real issue is: How did the apparent bias gain such importance in the public eye when it had such limited importance in reality? The problem cropped up through news reports that stopped short of the full truth by pointing out that some members of the Food and Nutrition Board had connections with organizations that produce foods high in cholesterol. Almost universally ignored was the fact that some of this group (even some of the *same* individuals who consult for "procholesterol" companies) had connections with firms that deliberately produce foods *low* in cholesterol and saturated fats. The members of the Board are experts in nutrition and health, and their advice is sought on that basis by government, by industry, and by independent organizations such as ours. Their credibility and, consequently, that of the report and of the Academy itself became an issue only when the news media failed to provide a balanced perspective or the whole truth.

With hindsight, it might have been prudent to ask some members at the Food and Nutrition Board to step aside so as to ensure that the report proper and not its authors would be the center of attention and debate. But the professional credentials of those Board members are impressive and impeccable—and in the end, that must be what counts.

*Philip Handler, President*  
National Academy of Sciences  
Washington, DC 20418

Received September 26, 1980.

**FD&C COLORS**  
(Crompton & Knowles)



for all three

- 1** Primary Dyes
- 2** Aluminum Lakes
- 3** Aluminum Lake Dispersions

**PLUS**

- sales/market research, counseling
- importing, exporting, warehousing

**AUSTIN CHEMICAL COMPANY, INC.**

205 West Touhy Avenue • Park Ridge, IL 60068  
(312) 823-9020 TELEX 254-121

If your library shelves are  
getting a little crowded



It's time to consider *J. Pharm. Sci.*  
backfiles, now available on 35-mm.  
positive microfilm from:

**University Microfilms, Inc.**  
300 N. Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

Complete backfile, Vols. 1-54 (1912-1965) \$658.80

Volumes 55 through last complete year \$21.20/reel

(one volume/reel)

— a Subsidiary of Xerox Corporation —