

tific goals and misunderstanding of the role science plays in advancing the quality of life have been the primary causes of public distrust. And yet the public is exposed as never before to information about science and scientists. A recent review of the scientific content of eight popular magazines found an increase of 85% in the last decade.⁷

The demand for information has paralleled the increased belief in the right to information. The emphasis on relevance and information can be seen in the nation-wide thrust among libraries to achieve relevance, to find for the library profession "a place in the social and political sun," by becoming "neighborhood information centers."⁸ Perhaps the answer to the apparent paradox presented by the simultaneous growth of anti-science and information-consciousness is that the public dislikes what it learns.

Thus, a recent *C&E News* piece about the public's growing hostility to science asked, "It can't be our fault, can it?"⁹ The editorial notes that science is blamed for things it has not explained, as well as for things it has. It is blamed also for the general anxiety produced by the social change of which science is a major cause. The public's reaction to science's failures on the one hand and its successes on the other is understandable. But then the author speaks of a source of hostility that is "external to science, the use of scientific results for nonbenevolent purposes not imagined or intended by scientists." There is nothing new in such a stance, but of all the rationalizations of hostility to science, it seems to me that this one is most damaging to science itself and certainly damaging to technology. The significance of such a "cop-out," as the young would call it, is certainly not lost on them. What better statement of a claim to socially irrelevant prerogatives can one imagine than that contained in this rationalization? Indeed, can one find even among young people condemned for their

anomie quite so forthright an expression of a basic alienation from social concerns?

In its way, this washing of the hands is a condemnation of technology. Scientists should object to it as much as technologists have the right to do. There is no need for me to reiterate here my position on the social responsibility of science. But it is a good time to applaud the efforts of men like Professor Paschkis who refuse to let technology continue as a whipping boy for the results of society's own deranged priorities. I hope that many readers of *Current Contents* will find it possible to join him at the ASME Annual Winter Meeting in Detroit, November 13-15.¹⁰

1. Further information on the meeting can be obtained from Dr. Victor Paschkis, Fellowship Farm, RD #3, Pottstown, Pa. 19464 (phone 215-326-5045).
2. Etzioni, A. & Nunn, C.Z. Public views of scientists. *Science* 181(4105):1123, 1973.
3. Quoted in: Chedd, G. The lady gets her way. *New Scientist* 59(853):14 passim, 5 July 1973.
4. *Scientists in search of their conscience*, ed. by A.R. Michaelis & H. Harvey. Berlin/Heidelberg/New York: Springer-Verlag, 1973.
5. Cotgrove, S. Anti-science. *New Scientist* 59(854):82-4, 12 July 1973.
6. Garfield, E. Information science and the information-conscious society. *J. Amer. Soc. Inform. Sci.* 22(2):71-3, 1971. Reprinted in: *Current Contents* No. 36, 9 September 1971, p. 6-9.
7. Sorenson, J.S. & Sorenson, D.D. A comparison of scientific content of magazines 1964-65 and 1969-70. *Journalism Quarterly* 50(1):97-101, Spring 1973.
8. Turick, D.A., ed. The neighborhood information center. *RQ* 12(4):341-63, Summer 1973.
9. Good, R.J. It can't be our fault, can it? *Chem. Eng. News* 20 August 1973, p. 3.
10. Readers will be interested to know that Dr. Paschkis was also the primary force in organization of the *Society for Social Responsibility in Science*, founded in 1948.