

## Professional Ethics Group Reports on Spring Meeting

The AAAS Professional Society Ethics Group (PSEG) meets twice a year to discuss ethical codes, misconduct and support procedures, and roles for scientific and technical societies in resolving disputes involving issues of professional ethics.

At its March meeting representatives from Sigma Xi, the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) described their activities with regard to ethical behavior. Fifteen other societies were represented at the meeting.

C. Ian Jackson, executive director of Sigma Xi, discussed their 1984 report entitled *Honor in Science*, created to give practical advice to men and women beginning a career in scientific research. He noted that before the 1960's, the honor system in science was derived from the self-imposed discipline of individual members of the scientific community. More recently, he said, the scientific community, along with much of the nation, has become concerned that this laissez-faire attitude of "figure it out for yourself" is inadequate.

*Honor in Science* discusses questions such as why honesty matters and pro-

vides an ethical framework to work out answers to problematic situations. The report adopts as a central ethical principle the rule that the truth shall be told at all times, and suggests that making a false statement should not go unpunished. In addition, *Honor in Science* details historical examples of forms of scientific dishonesty including those contained in a book written by Charles Babbage in 1830 entitled *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England*.

Arthur Schwartz, assistant general counsel, NSPE, described his society's involvement in the case of John Heneage, a registered professional engineer, formerly employed by the Arizona Public Service Company. Heneage alleged that he was dismissed from his job in November 1983 after he attempted to raise safety-related questions during construction of the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station. The Arizona Public Service Company claimed that Heneage was dismissed due to a lack of productivity. Heneage further contended that he was blackballed from other employment in the nuclear power industry because of his efforts to call attention to construction defects and to the use of inadequate-

ly qualified test engineers. These charges were denied by the utilities. Following a hearing conducted by the Labor Department in September 1984, both parties agreed to a settlement.

The Heneage case raises important questions as to the proper role a professional society should take in responding to technical disputes involving issues of professional practice and public safety. A representative for both NSPE and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers attended the hearing as an observer, not as a party in support of either side of the dispute.

Milt Lunch, general counsel for NSPE, noted that the society exercised an *amicus curiae* role in the Heneage case. He felt that the societies did not have adequate resources to investigate and establish an impartial record in such cases, but that they should rely upon the courts to do so.

Arthur Lerner, assistant director of health care in the Bureau of Competition, FTC, described current FTC concerns with respect to professional codes of ethics. Lerner noted that although there had been a long tradition of considering professionals such as law and medicine to be exempt from antitrust law, over the last 10 years a "revolution" has taken place with the application of antitrust law to professional ethics codes.

Antitrust enforcement in the health field, for example, was limited because of a widely based belief that enforcement efforts would be blocked by a variety of defenses including the notion that "learned professions" might in some manner be immune from antitrust liability for regulating activities within the professions. But in a landmark case in 1975, the Supreme Court ruled that no "learned professions" defense exists for professional societies.

Lerner volunteered that the FTC will, on request, review draft ethics codes of professional societies for elements that might be construed to violate antitrust legislation.

The Professional Society Ethics Group, an activity of the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, was formed in 1979 to provide a forum in which representatives of professional societies can discuss ethical concerns. Although many societies ei-

### Call for Nominations

Submission of entries in the 1986 selection of the AAAS Award for Scientific Freedom and Responsibility is invited. The AAAS Award recognizes scientists and engineers who have:

- acted to protect the public's health, safety, or welfare; or
- focused public attention on important potential impacts of science and technology on society by their responsible participation in public policy debates; or
- established important new precedents in carrying out the social responsibilities or in defending the professional freedoms of scientists and engineers.

The Award consists of a plaque and \$1000 which are presented to the recipient at the AAAS Annual Meeting. Nomination forms may be obtained from the Office of Scientific Freedom and Responsibility at the AAAS address. The deadline for nominations is 30 November 1985.

ther have a code of ethics or are in the process of drafting one, the rationale behind the codes varies widely. A society may develop a code based on the highest ideal to which a professional can aspire, such as “. . . to discourage enterprises or practices inimical to the public interest or welfare . . .” (The Chemist’s Creed, American Chemical Society). On the other hand it might develop a code that provides minimum standards for professional behavior, and clearly lays out procedures for correcting wrongdoing.

The Group will meet again in the Fall. All AAAS-affiliated scientific and engineering societies are invited to designate a representative to participate in the Professional Society Ethics Group. For further information write Sally Painter, CSFR, at the AAAS address.

SALLY PAINTER

*Committee on Scientific  
Freedom and Responsibility*

## Summer Fellows Work on Environmental Issues and with Mass Media

The AAAS Mass Media Science and Engineering and the Association’s Environmental Fellows Programs again placed scientists and engineers at media sites around the country and in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Since 1975, with support from the National Science Foundation and a number of corporations and foundations, AAAS has administered the Mass Media Science and Engineering Fellows Program as a part of its public understanding of science activities.

The 10-week summer program places 15 to 20 advanced students in science and engineering, primarily at the graduate level, with various print and broadcast sites across the country. Through this experience in science communication, the Fellows strengthen their skills in translating complex technical subjects to nonspecialists while acquiring an understanding of editorial decision-making and the ways in which news is disseminated effectively. A parallel goal of the program is to strengthen the relationship between scientists and engineers and the media.

Karen Wright, one of 17 1985 Mass Media Fellows, came to the program with a background in molecular biology at Bucknell University. Her experience at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* dem-

onstrates the value of being able to communicate—scientist to scientist—with interview subjects.

“As soon as they (scientists) learn about my background, they open up like steamed clams—they get excited about what they’re telling me, they fill in small but fascinating details that make a story

more readable, and they offer more background and insight into their motives and goals,” observes Wright.

“It certainly has convinced me that there’s a niche waiting to be filled, and that the AAAS program has targeted a very important need—journalists who know what makes science tick, and who



1985 Environmental Fellows, left to right, first row; Appiah Amirtharajah, John Hopkins University; Margaret Carter, West Chester University; Jerzy Filar, Johns Hopkins University; Patricia Bradt, Lehigh University; second row: William McTernan, University of Wyoming; Marylynn Yates, University of Arizona; Lisa Nowell, University of California, Davis; Patricia Curlin, program manager, AAAS; Terry Shehata, Maine State Department of Human Services; and Deborah Ross, Procter and Gamble Company.



1985 Mass Media Fellows and their media sites are, left to right, kneeling: Ethan Canin, *Newsweek*, New York City; Judy Berlfein, KUNC-FM, Greeley, Colorado; Richard Strickland, WPLG-TV, Miami; Bruce Lewenstein, “Innovations,” WNET-TV, Newark; standing: June Wiaz, program coordinator, AAAS; Hilda Colon, KPBS-FM, San Diego; Therese Lloyd, *U.S. News and World Report*, Washington, D.C.; Carl Winter, Richmond (Virginia) *Times Dispatch*; Nanette Sterman, Cable News Network, Atlanta; Stephen Redhead, Smithsonian World, Washington, D.C.; Karen Wright, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; Janet Weinrib, Charlotte (North Carolina) *Observer*; Carol Savonen, *Portland Oregonian*; Steve Mirsky, WSVN-TV, Miami; Ann Heise, *Milwaukee Journal*; Shara Lewis, WOSU-AM/FM, Columbus, Ohio; and Glenn Vogt, Chedd-Angier Production Company, Watertown, Massachusetts.

# Science

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