

Letters

Editor:

We thank H. Joel Jeffrey and Jay Labinger for their kind remarks about *The Golem* (*E&S*, Winter '94 and Fall '93). We are delighted that both writers think it is a useful account of science for scientists. What we say below is not meant to detract from our gratitude to Labinger for bringing the book to the attention of so many scientists in such a positive way. Nevertheless, we thought readers might be interested in the authors' view of Jeffrey's and Labinger's disagreement over the extent to which the book exhibits an unpalatably "social" view of science. In a word, we side with Jeffrey.

Labinger is correct in tracing the authors' origins to the movement known as "the sociology of scientific knowledge," and Jeffrey might well be uncomfortable with some of our previous work. It is the book that is being judged, however, not the authors. Jeffrey demonstrates through his correct reading that *The Golem* demands no allegiance to a radical viewpoint. Where Labinger suggests that we have "little interest in moderating [our] own positions in order to enlist scientists in true dialogue," he seems to have forgotten *The Golem* itself. Labinger's view of the book is, perhaps, influenced by his personal knowledge of some of the arguments we have had with our fellow observers of science.

The Golem is radical in its discussion of the relationship of science to other institutions, but it is very easy to demonstrate that it is not a radical book

in its interpretation of what goes on in the laboratory. First, some of the accounts of passages of science in *The Golem* are taken from work by historians who have no sympathy with the sociology of scientific knowledge. The most noteworthy examples are the two stories relating to the theory of relativity (but Gerald Holton's history of Millikan's oil-drop experiment would have fitted equally well). That some conservative historians saw the same things as we did when they looked closely at passages of scientific controversy was one of our strongest motivations for putting the studies together.

Second, *The Golem* makes a strong case in favor of expertise. It says that we should recognize that there can be competing expertises but not that any opinion is as good as an expert opinion. As Jeffrey remarks, there is nothing in *The Golem* that suggests that the arguments described in the chapters were biased by anything other than honest beliefs.

Third, initial indications suggest that *The Golem* is being widely read and appreciated by practicing scientists and that the remarks of Pinch quoted by Labinger are already out of date.

There is, then, no need for us to "moderate our position" to make true dialogue possible; true dialogue is already possible. We would change only one thing about *The Golem*. Some readers have taken us to be claiming that the studies are statistically representative of the range of day-to-day activity in science. The studies were meant to be representative of controversial science; we think there is hardly any controversial science that does not follow the route

described in *The Golem*. In a new preface to foreign editions and to the forthcoming paperback (Canto, fall 1994), we explain this more carefully.

Harry Collins, Director, Bath Science Studies Center, University of Bath, England

Trevor Pinch, Professor of Science and Technology Studies, Cornell University

Editor:

One of my prized recollections of Dr. DuBridges centers on a dialogue between "two freshmen." I was the freshman editor/publisher of the first post-World-War-II *little t* student handbook for the entering freshman class, summer of 1946-47. The book was incomplete without a welcoming message from the incoming president of Caltech, Lee A. DuBridges. After several rebuffs, I pleaded with the office in Throop to help me get in touch with him.

Dr. DuBridges was vacationing in Colorado en route to his new job and was not to be contacted. But finally I was given his telephone number. After several calls to the dude ranch where the DuBridges were staying, I made contact, and Dr. DuBridges graciously agreed to write a welcome for the handbook. His message read in part:

"I am not sure whether it is proper, or possible, for one "freshman" to welcome another. However, I do take pleasure in extending on behalf of the California Institute of Technology, cordial greetings to all students

entering the Institute for the first time this fall.

"After all, we have much in common. You and I, together we must now take up new surroundings which are unfamiliar to us. We now become a part of one of the greatest institutions of its kind in the world. It is our privilege to help make it greater. We must discover its fine points and preserve them; uncover any weak points and make them strong. We take up these new tasks at a critical, but propitious time. The exigencies of war have thrown this institution, like all others, into a fluid state. We must see that the new pattern into which it crystallizes is an even better one—adequately adapted to new conditions."

These remarks display a forthright and friendly style, which became his hallmark in dealing with faculty, trustees, and students. He quickly established good relationships with students and maintained a permanent policy of accessibility to Caltech graduates as they moved on and progressed in science and industry.

To those who felt no one would be able to follow Robert "Uncle Bob" A. Millikan, Lee DuBridges was blessed with the perfect balance of humanity, understanding, and intelligence to encourage the growth of Millikan's child. The friendship that began that summer between two freshmen endured during my student days and in my many postgraduate contacts with Caltech and Dr. DuBridges.

Hugh C. Carter, BS '49