

Letters

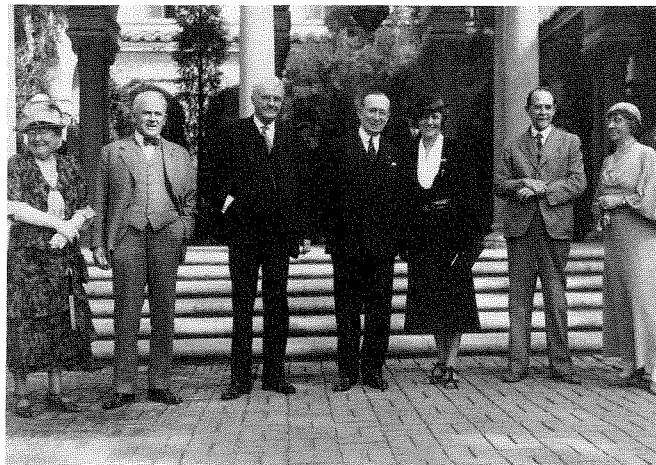
Editor: I have just read Judith Goodstein's chapter on the history of the Caltech biology division in the last issue of *Engineering & Science*. I have, of course, immediately ordered a copy of the book.

I am writing to make a few comments on the question of anti-Semitism. As I am sure you know, that was a prevailing attitude in the 1920s, and it is by no means extinct now. When I was chairman of physiology here at the University of Michigan, I was criticized for having too many Jews in the department. I gave up science 10 years ago, and I have occupied my time writing history of physiology and medicine. In going through the university archives in the Bentley Historical Library, I have encountered the warning that So-and-so is Jewish so watch out. There is the complimentary remark that although he is Jewish he is all right. Michigan is full of families descended from German immigrants, and I have encountered also the remark that someone who has a German name is not Jewish, as a recommendation.

As for T. H. Morgan, in 1933 I was an undergraduate at Caltech, and I spent one afternoon a week working with Morgan in the laboratory. On my 21st birthday my chief task was to fend off reporters, for that was the day the notice of the Nobel Prize reached Morgan. Morgan's assistant was Albert Tyler, who was also my teacher in a couple of courses. Once when Morgan and I were alone he made an entirely gratuitous, rather snide remark to the effect that you could always tell a Jew by the way he walked. That was stimulated by hearing Albert Tyler approach down the hall.

There is another side to this story. I

In this photo from "The Thomas Hunt Morgan Era in Biology" in the last issue of *E&S*, the man standing third from left between Robert Millikan and Guglielmo Marconi was misidentified as Allen Balch. He is in fact Harry Chandler, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* and another of Caltech's early benefactors and trustees. The 1933 occasion, besides welcoming the Marconis, was in celebration of Morgan's Nobel Prize. Morgan is second from right.



heard (and I have no recollection, however, where I heard it) that Morgan had been so impressed by Jacques Loeb that he concluded that only a Jew could be a good biochemist. The result was that he looked for the brightest young Jewish biochemist he could find, with the result that he brought Henry Borsook to Caltech. It's a good story, whether or not it is true.

Apropos your story about Morgan's remark at the Royal Society, the story I heard was that Morgan had been provided with a list of good British neurophysiologists among whom he might find a recruit. One on the list was Jack Eccles [later to win a Nobel Prize], who was not asked. Eccles told me when I was his student at Oxford that he would have accepted the job if it had been offered. The Wiersma-Van Harrefeld team really wasn't very good, though Wiersma was by far the better of the two.

All this is without documentation, anathema to a historian.

*Horace W. Davenport (BS '35,
PhD '39)*



The real Mr. and Mrs. Allen Balch, who financed the Athenaeum and part of Kerckhoff Laboratory, are shown above. Is Mrs. Balch also standing next to Millikan in the top photo? We're no longer certain, though it looks like her, and we would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows.