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Prof. John P. Holdren, Council Chair  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
c/o Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Dr. Holdren:

The designation of Bruce Alberts to become our new Editor-in-Chief of Science in March 2008 is a serious mistake. The AAAS Governing Council should rescind the appointment and reopen the search.

## 1.) The decline of the NAS/NRC

During twelve years as President of the NAS/NRC (1993-2005), Bruce Alberts showed an instinct for political accommodation that eroded the credibility of his institution. The New York Times conveyed this evaluation in an editorial (2005) seeking to encourage higher standards by his successor, Ralph Cicerone: It praised Ralph Cicerone's leadership on behalf of environmental research as a hopeful "upsurge" [sic] in forceful, independent reports." It wrote: "In years past the academy was routinely denounced for being too cozy with its federal patrons - for pulling its punches and muting any criticism in hopes of gaining future contracts for advisory work." <sup>1 2</sup>

AAAS is one of our most important and essential national institutions. Science must speak with a clear, independent, straight-shooting, and trusted voice to create agendas and maintain standards. Bruce Alberts is unsuited to control editorial and news decisions.

## 2.) Eroded scientific standards: the social sciences

Last fall, I sent a background paper for the Department of Justice ("Breach of

Contract, Conspiracy, Fraud, and Coverups Affecting NSF Programs”) to members of the AAAS Governing Council. It outlines a strong and focused case that Bruce Alberts and his associates severely damaged the social sciences and the civic role of American universities by illegitimate accommodations to Republican zealots. (They also failed to supervise the self-interested (and competition-inhibiting) behavior of powerful members of the Academy.) Let me incorporate these judgments, by reference to this earlier document, and add three additional comments:

A.) The neutered *en masse* redirection of the social sciences (that Alberts et al. wanted people to believe was legitimate *scientific* advice) continues its deadly effects. The Trustees of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) have announced that it is no longer financially viable and will be sold to Stanford. CASBS - that its Board once called “the crown jewel of the behavioral sciences” - can no longer convince enough donors that the behavioral sciences will produce future societal benefits.<sup>3</sup>

B.) My legal filing focused on civil liabilities and the *Harvard* case but Alberts et al. may face more serious penalties. Dr. Alberts ran a government chartered institution, used public funds, and had legal duties to protect rights of all scientists and provide impartial and unbiased scientific advice both in fact and in appearance. Any Pentagon procurement officer who permitted so much self-interested behavior (and insider trading and deal-making) by Defense contractors would go to jail.

C.) Bruce Alberts and his appointees suppressed recommendations for innovation across many social science fields throughout his tenure. An NIH Director who was equivalently negligent or prejudiced in his areas of responsibility would have been fired.<sup>4</sup>

Given two decades of silence, I cannot imagine how anyone who cares about evidence-based and effective government would support Bruce Alberts.

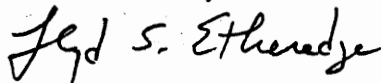
### 3. Lessons for the self-governance of science

I have forwarded to the AAAS Governing Council a copy of a letter from Donald Kennedy, the departing Editor-in-Chief of Science. Donald Kennedy has acknowledged, for the first time in writing, that Science has made editorial and journalistic decisions to honor a Mafia-like code of silence and keep AAAS members in the dark about the NAS/NRC decisions to suppress the social sciences and the battles that have been fought (and lost) behind closed doors beginning with David Hamburg’s Commission. Our Governing Council is just learning - and our 120,000 members do not yet know - about the information that was withheld from them. [E.g., many readers of Science now will be surprised to learn that the NAS/NRC Reports were “routinely denounced for being too cozy with its federal patrons . . . for pulling its punches and muting any criticism” as The New York Times (cited above) wrote.] Reading Science to understand the internal

politics of American science is like visiting Communist China and trying to understand how decisions are made in China by reading their newspapers. One lesson that we must draw is how much damage can be done to our country when any institution wields power and monitoring by a free and independent press is constrained. Science's Team Player silence eroded the self-governance of American science and contributed to what my teacher Irving Janis called "groupthink" - a combination of arrogance, insularity, and poor decisions.

Recently, we have lived through an era of missed opportunities and unwise accommodations to mindlessness. But ahead, especially with a new Administration, there are extraordinary, exciting opportunities to design rapid learning systems and accelerate innovation in every area of science, including social science. However to bring this new future to life we need change, fresh thinking, and greater scientific and civic candor than Bruce Alberts (69) is likely to provide. The more we learn about the costs of Bruce Alberts' performance in twelve years at the NAS/NRC, the less it appears to be a history that one would want to repeat. If you will permit a political scientist's observation: At this point, appointing Bruce Alberts to be Editor-in-Chief of Science is about as dumb as appointing a member of Richard Nixon's staff, after the Watergate break-in, to be Editor-in-Chief of the Washington Post.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge

cc: AAAS Governing Council

1. Cited, Lloyd S. Etheredge, "Breach of Contract, Conspiracy, Fraud, and Coverups Affecting NSF Programs." (September 24, 2007), p. 5. Online at [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net). The editorial appeared in the The New York Times, May 5, 2005, p. A22. I have been unable to convince myself that these deficiencies were forced upon Bruce Alberts by circumstances. During these same years the Institute of Medicine, in the same headquarters building, had better leaders. It has done splendid work that honors the scientific spirit and the civic role of science (Etheredge, "Breach of Contract ...", p. 23).

2. The erosion of NAS/NRC credibility may be wider. The National Science Board has ordered NSF to create a new system - to be under the control of the NSF Director - to solicit and evaluate ideas for transformative science. For most of the post WWII period the NAS/NRC system would have been trusted for this task.

3. Unless there are broader reforms and a renewed spirit, the skeptics have an understandable concern. By now, recruitment patterns in the social sciences have changed. Entire fields are losing their share of bold and talented researchers and withdrawing into scholasticism.

4. These include (*inter alia*): 1.) rapid learning to test ideological theories; 2.) addressing the eroding power of macroeconomic theories and policy tools and outmoded data systems; 3.) bold interdisciplinary research to study brain mechanisms and the effects of vivid hierarchical images on motivation and syndromes of non-rational behavior (including severe mental illness and the behavioral effects of discrimination); and 4.) new observation sites and data systems to understand changes in world politics.