

Alfred Baber Fonds

Correspondence

Smithsonian Exhibit
Committee 1995

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— SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT COMMITTEE —



American Chemical Society

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR and
SECRETARY

D. H. Michael Bowen

1155 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

Tel: (202) 872-4461

Fax: (202) 872-6338

April 10, 1995

Dr. Joan E. Shields, Chairman
Dr. Alfred R. Bader
Dr. Ronald C. Breslow
Dr. Joseph A. Dixon
Dr. Ned D. Heindel

Dear Joan and Gentlemen:

On behalf of Paul H. L. Walter, Chairman of the Board of Directors, I want to thank you for agreeing to serve on the Special Board Committee on the Smithsonian Exhibit, the new group authorized by the Board at its meeting in Anaheim. As you know, this committee will constitute the primary means by which the Society will communicate with the Smithsonian on policy and financial matters. Ann Messmore, as the principal staff contact on all matters relating to the SI, will work closely with the committee and serve as its staff liaison.

Dr. Walter will be in touch with you very soon in connection with his visit to SI Secretary Heyman, which has just been scheduled for May 2, 1995. Your committee will doubtless want to meet shortly after that meeting; Ann Messmore will work out the details with Dr. Shields.

The term for each of you on this committee will be for three years, through the end of 1997. Should you not be able to serve for the entire term, I am sure we will be able to adjust accordingly.

Thank you again for your willingness to assist the Society in an important way.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Bowen

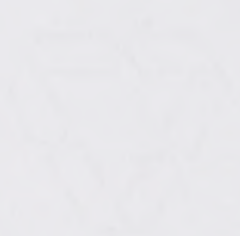
D.H. Michael Bowen

cc: Dr. John K Crum
Ms. Ann B. Messmore
Dr. Paul H.L. Walter

Dr. Bader: I was so glad to learn from Dr. Walter that you had agreed, after the Parsons Award dinner, to serve on this new committee. I am sure you will find it interesting and challenging. It was good to meet your wife and you once again in Anaheim.

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to create the opportunity for counterparts to meet each other and to meet instrument manufacturers, and to give them the experience of going to Pittcon."

TDA's interest in this program stems from its aim to supply U.S. firms with market entry, exposure, and information, thus helping them to establish a position in markets that are otherwise difficult to penetrate. Jones says, "We need to show U.S. companies that there is more to the continent than South Africa."

"TDA only considers projects that have the potential to mature into significant business opportunities for U.S. companies," she adds. Since TDA's establishment in 1980, projects supported have been associated with more than \$6 billion in exports by U.S. companies—25 times the amount of funds TDA has invested.

Pratap says the U.S. "has to be aggressive and penetrate Third World markets because Africa is not the same as it was 10 years ago. There is much more emphasis on development of science and technology and more environmental consciousness. Multiparty political systems and banking reform make the markets more penetrable." He also warns U.S. manufacturers about Japanese penetration of the scientific instrument market in Africa and says the U.S. is concentrating too much in Western Europe.

African governments are also interested in linkages. P. Shakie Kebasuele,

a representative from the Embassy of Botswana in Washington, D.C., addressed the participants at ACS headquarters. He said that his government is very interested in this kind of exchange because "science and technology and economic development are inseparable."

"Development and trade are inexorably linked," says John Malin, manager of the ACS Office of International Activities. "The engine that drives all of this is economics. This could be the beginning of better and bigger things in the future."

Linda Raber

ACS seeks changes in Smithsonian exhibit

The fires surrounding the crash of the *Enola Gay* exhibit commemorating the end of World War II appear to have rekindled the controversy around another of the Smithsonian Institution's exhibits—"Science in American Life." This is the American Chemical Society-sponsored exhibit at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., that deals with the interaction of science and society in the U.S. from the late 19th century to the present. The exhibit, which opened in April 1994, was funded with \$5.3 million from ACS. Since it opened, critics have derided the exhibit as "revisionist," "constructivist," and "politically correct." Some of the most vocal critics have been scientists.

Paul H. L. Walter, ACS Board chairman, says the exhibit "seems to emphasize very strongly the warts of science and seems to ignore, in many cases, the good things that science has done." He adds that, "When you think about what science has done for American life, much of that isn't really emphasized in the exhibit." He offers as examples "the chlorination of water, which probably did more to advance life expectancy than anything science has ever done, and the discovery of medicines that keep us alive."

Walter says, "The [birth control] pill could have been handled in a much more positive way than it was, and the discovery of nylon and synthetic fibers, which had a very profound effect on American life, could have been dealt with better than they were.

"It should come as no surprise that we, as a board of directors, were disappointed in some aspects of the way the exhibit came out," he says. "We certainly wanted an evenhanded discussion of science and society with a particular emphasis on chemistry, and I think in many cases [the Smithsonian] didn't present an evenhanded discussion."

Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in February, recently appointed Smithsonian Secretary I. Michael Heyman said that he would like to see some changes made in the exhibit that would highlight science's contributions to society. He also met with a group of American Physical Society (APS) members who raised concerns about the content of the exhibit. Late last year, then-APS President Burton Richter expressed to Heyman, on behalf of APS, his "profound dismay" over the exhibit.

Walter says ACS "is not averse to comments and concerns from other organizations." But in a strongly worded letter to Heyman, he noted that "the Smithsonian Institution, beset as it is by public and congressional criticism, may be tempted to make changes based on just the views of the most vocal groups." He reminded the secretary of the 1990 contractual agreement with ACS that the Smithsonian will consult with ACS on any decisions involving the exhibition. "And I think we can't forget that our \$5.3 million was the largest private gift ever received by the Smithsonian," Walter adds.

Walter says he hopes ACS and the Smithsonian will be able to "come to some mutual agreement on how we can improve this exhibit." He is determined to meet personally with Heyman soon to discuss the society's side of the issue. Walter says, "I was not a member of the ACS Board when this issue began. I certainly wasn't chairman of the board. The current secretary of the Smithsonian wasn't the secretary of the Smithsonian. Therefore, there ought to be an opportunity for us to reexamine the exhibit and see if there aren't ways that we can take an exhibit that has a lot of potential and try to correct the balance a little bit so it does what we want—which is to give a fair appraisal of how science has affected American society, particularly in the 20th century. That's all we're looking for."

Linda Raber



Jones: potential U.S. economic benefits

