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## SCIENCE AND THE PUBLIC

Granting that the social and political machinery for maximizing the benefits of science and minimizing its hazards is in need of considerable improvement, is it really necessary or even desirable to begin with talking about setting limits to inquiry or regulating laboratories the way we do the railroads? Would it not be more sensible, and in the long run more productive of good, to ask how science can be helped to become more beneficial to the public than how it can be kept from being more harmful? The distinction is much more than a purely semantic one. Society is almost certainly in greater danger from what it does not know—for example, about the stability of ecological systems, about the physical chemistry of the stratosphere, about the growth of human population—than from what it does know about inserting small snippets of mammalian DNA into bacteria or even cloning new strains of sheep.

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Public participation is not dangerous for the scientific enterprise. It is time-consuming, there is no doubt about that, as those who have defended clinical and basic research can well attest. And it is likely to lead to restraints that previously were not imposed. Nevertheless, the restraints that come from ethical considerations and recognition of the need for public accountability cannot be dismissed as inappropriate. To the contrary, they may lead in the end to greater public understanding of and appreciation for science. In any case, they are part of the social cost of democracy.

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