

"Problems with the Press: Who's Responsible?" appears in the March 1985 *BioScience* (Vol. 35, No. 3). Based on Rae Goodell's 1984 keynote address to the Council of Biology Editors, the article is a thoughtful look at the pressures on scientists to deal with the information needs of society and at the attitudes of scientists faced with this need.

Goodell is with the Writing Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her thesis is that communicating with the press is becoming an obligation for scientists and that "the burden is generally not a welcome one." She examines the reasons, and finds that lack of time, lack of clearcut standards for scientists in press encounters, and lack of predictable results in what appears from the pens of journalists are the three major causes for the distaste most scientists feel about interaction with the press.

Goodell's own conclusions, after a lengthy survey of current scientific writings and programming, are perhaps presented in the words of two science writers she quotes. Paul Ehrlich sees communicating with the public as a part of each scientist's responsibility, and calls it "tithing to society." Douglas Hofstadter, in a lecture for an MIT series on Political Issues and the Science Writer, said: "It seems to me that people who are going to be involved in writing about science, in doing science, in teaching science, do owe a certain debt to society to emphasize what they believe is truly important."

Fellowships and awards are proliferating in the strictly scientific world now, recognizing excellence in popular science writing and broadcasting. Universities are strengthening their own coverage of science within the schools and are setting up specialized courses for scientists in public information writing. Goodell sees the entire field of public science interaction as alive and stirring with change.