

Food, Nutrition and Special Interests

To the Editor:

Dr. Alfred Harper's indignation (letter June 16) at your June 3 critical editorial on the "Towards Healthful Diets" report of the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences is as misplaced as is his association of such criticisms with Nazi persecution of the Dutch medical profession.

Skepticism of the report in part expresses general recognition that the membership of the Food and Nutrition Board reflects persisting and generally undisclosed special interests. Dr. Harper, chairman of the N.S.A. panel, consults for Kraft, the meat industry and others. Dr. Robert Olson, author of the heart-disease section of the report, is a consultant to the egg, dairy and other food industries. No scientific or consumer advocate of low-fat diets served on the panel.

Such problems were discussed at U.S. Senate hearings before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs eight years ago, when it was pointed out that "the close identification of the N.A.S.-N.R.C. Food Protection Committee with industrial interests makes it singularly inappropriate as a major source of independent advice on consumer safety." These con-

cerns do not yet appear to have been fully and openly resolved by the Academy or its Congressional, Federal and other contractees.

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