FROM THE ACADEMIES

With this premiere of *Issues in Science and Technology*, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine launch a new publication dedicated to the broadening of enlightened opinion, reasoned discussion, and informed debate of national and international issues in which science and technology play a critical role. On behalf of my colleagues Robert M. White and Frederick C. Robbins and our advisory board and editors, I welcome you to the readership of *Issues*.

Initiation of a new publication is not undertaken lightly; few among us can assimilate the information that now comes to us daily, weekly, and monthly by way of publications, special reports, and the press. But among these avenues of communication there is insufficient coverage of many critical policy issues in which technology, health, and science play an important role. Executives in the public and private sectors and leaders of education and other public institutions need this coverage for informed decisionmaking.

The inextricable relationship between science and technology and society is intensifying: discoveries representing profound increases in scientific understanding of the physical universe take place at an astounding rate; the life sciences have achieved an understanding of the processes of life and a capacity to care for human needs not dreamed possible two decades ago. But these advances present us with a host of personal and public policy decisions. Environmental and health regulatory policies rest on technical and scientific evidence. The governments of advanced industrial nations and companies within those nations are investing heavily in new research and technology. In the United States, private-sector expenditures for research and development today exceed those of the government, reversing a thirty-year pattern. Virtually every state has a new program for economic and industrial growth and reform of public education. Some developing nations are turning to high technology not only for their own advancement but to compete aggressively with developed nations for markets, while population growth, poverty, and poor agricultural practices are holding other nations hostage to their current economic and social conditions. Arms control remains an elusive global objective. *Issues in Science and Technology* will discuss and debate these and other critical issues affecting all of us as individuals and as decisionmakers.

Issues is unlike other publications of the Academies and the Institute of Medicine, which examine specific problems—frequently at the request of government—and present a consensus of expert opinion. In contrast, *Issues in Science and Technology* is an independent journal of opinion. Because our institutions lie at the intersection of national and international discussions of science, technology, and health policy, *Issues* has behind it resources no other institution can offer. And it will provide, over time, a forum where all credible points of view are aired. It is our hope that you will find this journal provocative, informative, and lively and that you will contribute to the debate and discussion of issues raised by its authors.

President, National Academy of Sciences