

## Editorial

Giving up any office is a little like dying. In hopes of a joyful resurrection, we make our dispositions and trust that the bereaved will be able to manage on their own; and then at the last comes the gnawing thought that they will manage all too well. Certainly there is every reason to feel confident that this journal will continue to thrive and to move in new directions while maintaining rigorous standards of scholarship under its new editor and his team; and we congratulate the British Society for the History of Science on its good fortune in securing the services of John Brooke. A journal published under the auspices of a society, as this one is, has immense advantages. Advice and support is constantly available to the editor, and at conferences and council meetings he is continually stimulated.

This Society has been very prudent in giving its editors a free hand, while appointing them for a fixed term. Advice is always helpful, and need not after all be followed; while close direction would make the proper carrying out of the task impossible. While endeavouring like Jeeves to give satisfaction, we cannot please all the people all the time; and an editor in the last resort has to trust his judgement and please himself. The editor is therefore responsible for everything; but the personal eccentricities and limitations of any editor should not be allowed to develop into a tradition.

The Editorial Board has always been most helpful, as have the many referees who have carefully gone through papers submitted to us; without this thankless and confidential activity our task would be impossible. It has been our fortune since taking up office in 1981 to live through a dismal period of financial crisis for Higher Education in Britain generally, in which the History of Science has suffered particularly badly. We hope counter-inductively that things might now begin to improve. It is striking that the journal has been able to expand through this difficult period, and that good papers have been coming in. We have of course never been narrowly British, but an international journal with a firm British base; reckoning to give our members and readers a reasonable picture of what is going on in the history of science.

The journal has been blessed with good fortune, and we leave it a wiser but not a sadder man. Editing has much in common with fishing; one can toil long and catch nothing, and in pursuing a bream one may miss a salmon. Some papers were landed only after a good deal of careful playing, and we feel some pride in and affection for these; but of course there were some that for one reason or another got away, and here the editor can only repent that a fault in his tone must have broken the line, and recommend authors to be thick-skinned and persistent. It might be supposed that being an editor might turn anybody into Public Enemy No. 1; but on the contrary it has been for the retiring incumbent a source of real friendship, and we are very grateful to the Society for giving us this splendid opportunity to learn so much.