

Scientific Panic Attacks

"Scientists Attack the Federal Budget with the Politics of Calculated Panic" by Daniel S. Greenberg, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Mar. 26, 1999), 1255 23rd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Again and again in recent years, leaders of American science have warned of impending catastrophe due to inadequate federal support for research. Nonsense, argues science journalist Greenberg, a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University. He offers samples of the alarmist rhetoric, and some deflating facts.

- Leon E. Rosenberg, then dean of Yale University's School of Medicine, asserted in 1990 that "our nation's health research program is burning, and the conflagration is spreading." *Fact*: Between 1980 and 1990, appropriations for the National Institutes of Health increased from \$2 billion to \$4.7 billion—an inflation-adjusted gain of \$1.7 billion.

- Leon M. Lederman, in his inaugural address as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, ominously declared in 1991 that "our current capability for research is only about one-third what it was in the late 1960s—a golden age

whose achievements the nation is still profiting from." *Fact*: Between 1968 and 1991, federal support for science at colleges and universities increased from \$1.5 billion to \$10.2 billion.

Many scientists "have argued that the end of the Cold War removed a major stimulus for government spending on science," Greenberg notes. But federal support for basic research climbed from \$11.2 billion in 1990 to \$15.2 billion in 1998.

Somehow, the good news is never good enough, as scientists gloomily fixate on whether federal support is growing as fast as before. The important fact is that it's *growing*, contends Greenberg. From 1996 to 1997, "despite the usual dire warnings," the federal budget for research and development (including basic research) grew from \$71.2 billion to \$73.9 billion. That may not be sufficiently fast growth for some scientists, Greenberg says, but it *is* growth.

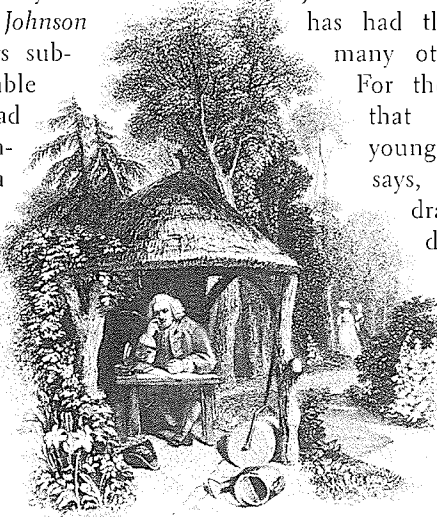
ARTS & LETTERS

Beyond Boswell

"Why Read Samuel Johnson?" by Stephen Miller, in *The Sewanee Review* (Winter 1999), 735 University Ave., Sewanee, Tenn. 37383-1000.

Many more people today read James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791), studded with its subject's witty and forceful table talk, than trouble to read the estimable Dr. Johnson himself. That is a pity, contends Miller, a widely published essayist, because Samuel Johnson (1709-84) "was a great prose stylist with a profound understanding of the heart of man."

Although Boswell's classic may whet some readers' appetite for



A quiet moment in the life of Johnson

Johnson's own works, it probably has had the opposite effect on many others, Miller believes. For the portrait of Johnson that emerges from his young friend's book, Miller says, resembles the one drawn by Johnson's detractors, such as the 19th-century Whig historian Thomas Macaulay. "The characteristic peculiarity of [Johnson's] intellect was the union of great powers with low prejudices," claimed Macaulay, who also