

Raman rejoinder

In the news item on the Raman Research Institute (RRI) in Bangalore (*Nature*, **349**, 732, 1991), your correspondent has rightly stated that I have not commented publicly but would do so in an appropriate forum. Perhaps it is appropriate to comment in *Nature* if only to clear up distortions, inaccuracies and omissions in the report.

(1) My recommendation to the governing council on Dr C. V. Vishveshwara's contract was not a "sacking" and the abruptness was only apparent. It was certainly not abrupt to the person concerned. Anyone who runs an institute will appreciate the many avenues one goes through in such a case before seeking more drastic remedies. Since things started to go wrong in the mid-1980s, the process has occupied roughly half of Vishveshwara's stay at the RRI.

(2) The international reputation based on his early work was of course the reason why Vishveshwara was invited to set up a school of research in the first place. Your report deals very cursorily with the more relevant question of what was achieved (or not) subsequently. Any visitor to the rest of the astrophysics group at the institute can confirm that the overall atmosphere has been one of friendly interaction, open discussions, participation in seminars and training and encouragement of students and young people. Many colleagues (all

junior to Vishveshwara) have contributed to this atmosphere and their work has been recognized by the best form of peer review—invitations to talk at international meetings. If Vishveshwara had measured up to these standards, there would have been no need for me to make a negative recommendation to the council about his contract.

(3) The case was by no means "all set to be closed" when the deciding authority (the governing council) took it up. Three meetings were held and a committee was appointed which submitted a unanimous report*. An important part of this report was the stress on building a new school in relativity and gravitation as the old one did not take off.

(4) No restriction on collaboration or the use of institute facilities existed before, during or after the council's resolution. The reference to personal research, which has been twisted to imply the opposite in your report, simply refers to the council's perception confirming my belief that Vishveshwara's earlier role as the nucleus of a group should come to an end. The decision I took to shift his office was a natural consequence of his changed role and has been blown up out of all proportion. The new office is a pleasant one, in the same building where I work. More

*The committee consisted of S. K. Joshi (NPL, Delhi), Convener, K. Kasturirangan (ISRO, Bangalore), P. J. Lavakare (DST, New Delhi), O. Siddiqi (TIFR, Bombay) and G. Swarup (GMRTC, Pune). —Ed

research activity will shift there in the future as and when the need for space arises.

(5) The fact that the unanimous resolution of the council overruled my earlier recommendation and that the trust further tempered the contract and my executive actions clearly show the system of due process and checks and balances at work. This is very far from the image of the institute's functioning conveyed in your report.

(6) A good part of the report covers opinions of various individuals and is thus selective though factual.

(7) The institute's main funding agency, the Department of Science and Technology (represented on its council) is needlessly criticized as being ostrich-like. In fact, its stand reflects its own independent assessment of the role and limits of a funding agency.

I am confident that RRI will continue to be judged by the quality of its atmosphere and research output and will not be found wanting. My colleagues who have worked to build up and maintain this quality would like nothing better than to be allowed to return to their task, without disturbance from ill-informed outcry.

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