– Letter to Science
– composed by Jane.
Jean Lauder

As members of the Neuroscience community, we the undersigned are pleased that the Nobel Prize for Medicine has been awarded to two of our distinguished colleagues, Drs. Rita Levi-Montalcini and Stanley Cohen for their work on growth factors, and we congratulate them for this high honor.

We are shocked and saddened, however, by the exclusion of Dr. Viktor Hamburger, co-discoverer of the nerve growth factor with Dr. Levi-Montalcini, from this award. As all of us are aware, this discovery was made possible by the original observations of Dr. Hamburger on the ability of peripheral tissue to stimulate neuronal growth, followed by his invitation to Dr. Levi-Montalcini to come to his laboratory in St. Louis to jointly investigate this phenomenon, which she had also observed. Together they performed the key experiments leading to their discovery of the factor contained in tumor cells and mouse salivary glands that dramatically stimulated the growth of cultured nervous tissue, which they named "nerve growth factor" (NGF). Dr. Cohen joined them in this endeavour and proceeded to characterize the structure of this molecule. His later work on other growth factors was initially stimulated by observations he made while investigating NGF with Drs. Hamburger and Levi-Montalcini.

In his typical generous fashion, Dr. Hamburger did not attempt to take credit for the discovery of NGF, either as a key participant or as head of the laboratory in which it was made, but always gave full

credit to his colleague Dr. Levi-Montalcini, often down-playing his own important role in this work. Although this is not the first time that the Nobel Committee has omitted from the prize one of the key partcipants in a major scientific breakthrough, we feel that it is especially unfair and unfortunate in the case of Viktor Hamburger, who was a driving force and seminal influence in the discovery of NGF, and who, by his early inquiries into neuronal growth, actually began the growth factor field. Since Dr. Hamburger has already received a series of awards for this work together with Drs. Levi-Montalcini and Cohen, we find it incomprehensible that he was excluded from this highest of honors. We hope that our younger colleagues will not interpret this omission to mean that there is no place for generosity and humility in the competitive world of scientific endeavour.

Jean - This may be more red ink than you wanted!

Revisions by Dale

As ~~members of the Neuroscience community~~ neuroscientists, we ~~the undersigned~~ are naturally pleased that the Nobel Prize for Physiol. and ? Medicine has been awarded to ~~two of our distinguished colleagues, Drs.~~ Rita Levi-Montalcini and Stanley Cohen for their outstanding work on growth factors ~~and we congratulate them for this high honor.~~

We are ~~shocked and saddened~~ dismayed, however, by the exclusion of ~~Dr.~~ Viktor Hamburger, co-discoverer of the nerve growth factor with ~~Dr.~~ Levi-Montalcini, from this award. ~~As all of us are aware,~~ This discovery was made possible by the original observations of ~~Dr.~~ Hamburger on the ~~ability~~ action of peripheral tissues ~~to stimulate~~ or neural ~~neuronal~~ growth, ~~followed by his invitation to~~ He invited ~~Dr.~~ Levi-Montalcini in 1947 to come to his laboratory in St. Louis to jointly investigate this phenomenon, which she had also observed. Together with Elmer Bueker, a former student of Hamburger's, they performed ~~the~~ key experiments ~~leading~~ which led to their discovery of the a factor ~~contained in~~ secreted by tumor cells ~~and mouse salivary glands~~ that ~~dramatically~~ selectively stimulated the growth of ~~cultured nervous tissue, which~~ sensory and sympathetic nerve cells they named "nerve growth factor" (NGF). ~~Dr.~~ Stanley Cohen joined them in this endeavour and, this together with Levi-Montalcini proceeded in 1954 to characterize the structure of this molecule. His later work on other growth factors was initially stimulated by observations he made while investigating NGF with ~~Drs. Hamburger and~~ Levi-Montalcini.

a) Bueker performed the key experiments at Georgetown
b) Cohen discovered NGF in glands
c) Not in vitro
d) Hamburger not involved ~ 1953-4

~~In his typical generous fashion,~~ Characteristically ~~Dr.~~ Hamburger did not attempt to take credit for the discovery of NGF, either as a key participant or as head of the laboratory in which ~~it~~ the discovery was made, ~~but~~ always gave full Rather he

This whole section is not entirely correct from the historical point of view.

credit to his colleague ~~Dr. Levi-Montalcini~~, often down-playing his own important role in this work. Although this is not the first time that the Nobel Committee has ~~omitted from the prize~~ neglected one of the key partcipants in a major scientific breakthrough, we feel that it is especially ~~unfair and~~ unfortunate in the case of Viktor Hamburger, who was ~~a driving force and seminal influence~~ the pivotal figure in the discovery of NGF. ~~and who, by his early inquiries into neuronal growth, actually began the growth factor field~~ not entirely true Since Dr. Hamburger has already received ~~a series of~~ awards for this work together with Drs. Levi-Montalcini and Cohen, ~~we find it incomprehensible that~~ it is difficult to understand what he was excluded from this highest of honors. We hope that our younger colleagues will not interpret this omission to mean that there is no place for generosity and humility in the competitive world of scientific endeavour.

Shorey, Detwiler began it

only I that I know of — Horwitz Prize.