laboratories going, hold their teams together and, sometimes, to support even their own personal salaries. In the complex world of grant-getting, moral sponsorship -- for example, the support of the labour movement -- may be critically important in the getting of research grants from government or industry. And are researchers willing to go against government scientific policies when grants are at stake?

These pressures may be just too much for scientific objectivity to be maintained at a consistently high level at all times.

Scientific research is a multi-million dollar industry and it is itself an economic interest just like business and labour -- and often much more effective than either at advocating its cause. Some scientists criticize the media, in relation to asbestos, for distorting scientific data, for oversimplifying issues, and for partial reporting. But can we truly claim, in relation to asbestos, that scientists have never manipulated the media? After all, uncertainty is a fertile breeding ground for speculation.

And yet, despite all this, the decision makers and the public continue to expect trustworthy science from scientists on scientific questions, on asbestos and other matters too. Are they hopelessly misled, are the expectations doomed to disappointment, or are they really right in viewing science as a process capable of functioning independently of political and economic factors? Some people regard any such idealism as hopeless: scientists, they point out, are flesh and blood, prey to the same prejudices and weaknesses as everyone else, prejudices and weaknesses which no amount of intelligence or training can combat. Some people maintain that history shows that science does represent a higher ideal in its search for underlying scientific truth and that scientists, flesh and blood though they be, belong to a discipline strong enough to override the dictates of political and economic life even though some scientists have always been willing to betray the discipline and sacrifice its standards.