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# THE TIMES

## The failure of science to attract more women

Sir, Outbursts such as Sir Tim Hunt's, though an isolated incident, do nothing to help women in STEM's confidence. The biggest professional issue that women often face is their lack of self-belief, which too often holds them back from pushing themselves forward in their careers and realising their full potential. Sadly, this begins in the classroom. A recent study by the OECD found that girls do worse than boys in maths and science for the same reason.

Women are a minority in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), making up only 15.5 per cent of the workforce. If we want this to change, industry figures such as Sir Tim should channel their efforts into ensuring that equality is achieved across the board, rather than acting like a "chauvinist pig". It is crucial to Britain's economic future: a diverse workforce and leadership team is incredibly beneficial and creates a better working environment for all.

**Adeline Ginn**

Founder, Women in Rail, and general counsel, Angel Trains

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## The failure of science to attract more women

Sir, Sir Tim Hunt has perhaps forgotten that for most of us the value of science and scientists lies in the way they can contribute to enhance our society. Given such prejudicial views as those reported on your front page ("Don't let women work with men, says Nobel winner", June 10), his contributions to science — however technically brilliant — must be viewed with caution.

My late father, the Nobel prizewinner Professor Sir Ernst Chain, gave penicillin to the world. This did not stop him from sharing and discussing his scientific ideas with his wife, Professor Anne Beloff-Chain, an eminent biochemist in the field of obesity and diabetes. It was a partnership imbued with respect which embodied gender equality but yielded exciting scientific results.  
DR JUDY LEVER-CHAIN  
Pinner, Middx

Sir, Reading Sir Tim Hunt's comments has made me even more grateful to belong to a generation of outstanding female scientists who work productively (not reproductively) alongside our respectful male colleagues. Perhaps the knowledge of the important aspects of cell cycle control which ultimately resulted in his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine would have been better applied, in his case, to important aspects of self-control.  
DR JULIETTE HARRIS  
Radlett, Herts

Sir, The problem facing science is not women, it is a failure of science to attract and retain women. The world

faces huge challenges — food security, cyber security, green and safe energy, to name but a few. We are more likely to find solutions to these challenges if we encourage bright people of both genders to work in science. Sir Tim Hunt's comments suggest that there is still a job of work to do for those of us campaigning to increase diversity in the scientific workforce.

Many women have very successful careers in science and are making a big difference, but we make up less than one in five of the UK scientific workforce. Encouragingly, the campaign to address this shameful statistic has gained real momentum in the past couple of years. Sir Tim's comments serve only to spur us on.  
HELEN WOLLASTON  
Director, WISE campaign

Sir, Outbursts such as Sir Tim Hunt's, though an isolated incident, do nothing to help women in STEM's confidence. The biggest professional issue that women often face is their lack of self-belief, which too often holds them back from pushing themselves forward in their careers and realising their full potential. Sadly, this begins in the classroom. A recent study by the OECD found that girls do worse than boys in maths and science for the same reason.

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crucial to Britain's economic future: a diverse workforce and leadership team is incredibly beneficial and creates a better working environment for all.

ADELINE GINN  
Founder, Women in Rail, and general counsel, Angel Trains

Sir, It is hard to believe that comments made by Sir Tim Hunt at a conference in South Korea should have created such a furore. Despite any assertions to the contrary, when men and women work together they do often fall in love; the airline industry is a typical example. Such workplace liaisons can have disastrous consequences, which is why many organisations still frown on them.

Personally, far from condemning Sir Tim's speech, I would be more concerned about his inability to take into account the sensibilities of his audience when choosing his words. I find there is little to cause for alarm in what he actually said.  
LINDA PIGGOTT-VIJEH  
Combe St Nicholas, Somerset

Sir, The revelation that Sir Tim is married to another scientist begs two further questions. Did Sir Tim and Professor Mary Collins ever share a laboratory and, if they did, did she cry when criticised?  
JOHN BASS  
Hythe, Hants

Sir, My wife fell in love and married a fellow laboratory assistant nearly 55 happy years ago.

I still like being distracted.  
JIM HORLER  
Wookey, Somerset