

## LETTER TO THE EDITORS

27 February 1992

Dr. Austin Long  
Ms. Renee Kra  
*RADIOCARBON*  
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Dear Austin and Renee,

I read Punning's letter about the Association of Eastern European, Baltic and other laboratories with interest. It is important to realize that these laboratories face a somewhat different situation than many others. The fact that these labs have already decided to form their own organization does suggest some action be taken on the question of an International  $^{14}\text{C}$  Organization.

From my point of view, I agreed to the Committee that was given the task of investigating the possibility of an "International Association of  $^{14}\text{C}$  Laboratories," although I am not yet completely convinced of the merits of such an organization. It is useful for funding of *RADIOCARBON* subscriptions and back issues for laboratories that do not have access to hard currency. Perhaps a new function may be to assist those laboratories in difficulty with advice and so on.

We already have a limited program to help third-world laboratories by providing free  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates. The question of the survival of the laboratories in Eastern Europe, the Baltics and the former Soviet republics is important, but requires a different solution. Clearly, they need some kind of encouragement. I think that their main goal at this time is to be able to generate funding from external sources. This could be done if they were to compete for  $^{14}\text{C}$  contracts and business, which western  $^{14}\text{C}$  labs routinely do. I think one of the problems is perhaps that these laboratories do not know how to approach this problem. Legal and structural problems may be involved also, *e.g.*, exchange controls and lack of convertibility of currency.

The expense of organizing a meeting of the Committee solely for the purpose of discussing this question seems to rule this out. Also, as you feel that *RADIOCARBON* should not be directly involved in arranging a meeting of this Committee, perhaps a solution would be to ask one of its members to collect opinions from all the others on how the new organization could be set up, how it would operate and how it would aid the labs mentioned above.

It is quite easy to contact most people by fax or telephone, with some persistence. I would suggest that perhaps Robert Hedges or Zhou Weijian would be ideal for this task.

Yours sincerely,

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