

Banquet Speech

Sydney Brenner's speech at the Nobel Banquet, December 10, 2002



Sydney Brenner delivering his banquet speech.

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Your Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After that speech* I am afraid I come as an anticlimax. I was asked to prepare my speech because I understand it will be captioned for the Swedish public, and so it will be difficult for me to change what I have to say, because that will be very confusing. However, I will add something which arises from what we have just seen in the brilliant show that was presented to us, because it gave me many ideas for a uniform for Nobel Laureates. In particular I liked the person who had such a swollen head, that could be easily converted into the bubble economy. And for my own choice, if I had any hair at all, I would dye it orange, put on a gold lamé dress and wear a top hat.

But now I come to what I want to say. And the best way I can say it, is to tell you about a letter I've received. A Nobel Prize winner gets many letters. This was from a student in China. His e-mail said: "Dear Dr. Sydney Brenner, I wish also to win a Nobel Prize. Please tell me how to do it." I have been considering the reply which will say something like this: First you must choose the right place for your work with generous sponsors to support you. Cambridge and the Medical Research Council will do. Then you need to discover the right animal to work on - a worm such as *C. elegans* for example. Next, choose excellent colleagues who are willing to join you in the hard work you will need to do. How about John Sulston and Robert Horvitz for a starter. You must also make sure that they can find other colleagues and students. Everybody will have to work hard.

Finally, and most important of all, you must select a Nobel Committee which is enlightened and appreciative and has an excellent chairman with unquestioned discernment.

All of this is necessary to bring you to this point where, on behalf of your colleagues, you can thank everybody for the opportunity to be present here and to make this speech.