These are Tough Times. And tough times *demand tough talk, demand tough hearts*...or so the song goes. Globally, we are going through what is probably the worst financial crisis in living memory...businesses are closing, banks are closing, even whole countries are on the verge of bankruptcy. We are all being asked to tighten our belts as governments struggle to balance the books; the money has to be found from somewhere as we have to find a way to pay our debts. Of course, we all cry 'no, not us, you cannot cut our funding, we will not survive' and of course for many, this sadly will be true. But governments have to make *tough choices* (we have heard that *so many times* recently) about where to allocate the meagre funds at their disposal...where they will be most effective, and I, for one, don't envy them that task.

So, how do we get out of this mess? One thing we have to do is to generate wealth, we have to start making and selling things again, and that means encouraging manufacturing, from the processing of raw materials to the final product. In many ways, we in our field should consider ourselves to be fortunate. We work in *Materials Science* and everything is made from *Materials* so in theory we really should be in demand...but are we? And we, in this small community within *Materials Science* that has a passion for phase diagrams and thermodynamics, should feel doubly fortunate, as we generate some of the most basic information on how materials are processed, how new materials can be designed, how they may interact in their working environments, whether they will be capable of doing what they have been designed to do...but again, do we?

I know to many, and I have actually heard this from more than one fellow materials scientist, that phase diagram research is just 'stamp collecting', just 'datasheet production'. To some, it's not seen to be particularly useful, not the new fashionable subject on which generous research funds have been heaped in the recent past; but what *is* new? We all know that nanostructured materials have been around for years. If we have to persuade our fellow Materials Scientists of our value, what hope do we have persuading anyone else?

So, how will we fare in these Tough Times? Will we be given the support we need to help drive the recovery? I'm not so optimistic. Our field has been in decline, certainly in the Western World, for many years. We have to fight, we have to lobby, we have to shout 'no, not us, you cannot cut our funding, we will not survive.' I just hope they listen, and as the governments, funding agencies, universities and industry allocate their meagre funds, they don't forget completely those who provide the fundamental building blocks of *Materials Science*. For if it *is* all taken away, it may all come crashing down around our ears.

Andy Watson
Associate Editor
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