If selfish interests are fostered at the expense of the public welfare, the question can not have an affirmative answer, and if such selfish interests are those of a minority they have no place in a democracy once they are recognized as selfish.

No doubt the problem of selfish interest is a perplexing one, and like all perplexing problems should be approached scientifically. But the possibility of "approaching it with the same order of scientific intelligence as one approaches the problems of instability in gravimetry or geomagnetism," as Dr. Stetson suggests, seems at present rather remote. It is particularly so if selfish interest is "a specific entity in human behavior inherited through evolutionary processes as a means for the preservation of the individual and the species." Must we await the same slow evolutionary processes which millions of years ago eliminated selfish interest in societies of insects and which has brought about little if any change since? Fortunately there are psychological and social means, the effectiveness of which is more immediate if less permanent than strictly biological processes. To different degrees and at different times human society has imposed restrictions on the free play of selfish interests by legal and judicial processes or by other cultural means. Selfishness is not legislated out of existence, but it may be checked with fair success. It is a social solution of a social problem, and is as scientific as the use of water to extinguish fire.

Restrictions which may be imposed by majorities on the selfish interests of smaller groups are the safeguards of a democracy. The lack of such safeguards contributed to the seizure of power in Germany by selfish interests which raised their puppet Hitler to the dictatorship. It can't happen here if an informed public opinion is alert to any threat to the general welfare.

The conclusions to which I come are nearly the same as those of Dr. Stetson—that the question resolves itself into the relative merits of no control as against centralized control, of haphazard arrangements as against organization. In this paraphrase I have avoided the words "dangers" and "compulsion" which he uses. There need be no danger so long as we have our democratic rights and privileges to prevent the usurpation of power by selfish interests; there need be no compulsion exerted on any who do not require it in the interest of public welfare.

The National Research Council has done a good job within the limitations imposed on it. It has stimulated, surveyed, promoted, served, directed attention, gathered and collated, and the men who have carried on this work are to be commended for their accomplishments. The fears of some scientists which were expressed contemporary to the creation of the council have not been justified. But it is doubtful if the council has had the power, even though willing to use it, to accomplish all the major objectives of the Science Mobilization Bill.

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DATES OF PUBLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

IN taxonomy, the solution of a problem often depends upon the determination of the exact dates of publication of the various papers concerned (the application of the law of priority), although in other fields the point is only of historical interest or involves only a desire to give credit where due.

It seems important to emphasize that editors should take pains to make known the actual date of appearance of the journals in their care, especially in these times when printing delays mean that the month or sometimes even the year of actual appearance does not coincide with the stated imprint date.

In one instance which I have met with, the cover and title page both state that the volume appeared on July 15, 1936, whereas I was informed by letter of November 25, 1937, that it was still being proofread. My copy actually arrived on February 18, 1938! A survey of the current periodicals in our library in my own field showed that most of the numbers are now being received from one to three months later than the date stated on the title page.

Some journals, fortunately, have made it a regular practice to insert somewhere in each issue, usually at the end, a statement of the "actual date of publication," date of mailing, date of mailing to a selected list of depositories to establish publication, date offered for sale, etc. Whatever the method, it does seem desirable for editors to consider for their journals some policy relative to making known the actual date of publication, especially for periodicals in fields where questions of priority may be involved.

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MORE ON "STARRING"

IT is hard to believe that Dr. C. A. Browne really believes that the situation is as bad as he indicates on page 281 of the September 24 issue of SCIENCE. I am primarily writing to answer his first question because of my position as a member of the visiting committee for the Chemistry Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology but with no other connection with that institution. The question is as to why the list of 82 suggestions for "starring" in the seventh edition of the Biographical Directory of "American Men of Science" includes so many from that institution. The reason is historical. In the past twenty

years the institute has lost an unusually large number of outstanding chemists. In spite of vigorous efforts it was impossible to replace these men by other men of approximately similar distinction. Consequently, two presidents of the institute have made every effort to encourage the younger members of the chemistry staff and to add to that staff young men of promise. The result of this policy has been increasingly evident in recent years. Similar factors have been at work at several of the other institutions which show large numbers of "nominations." On the other hand, many of the institutions which have no representatives or only one already have large numbers of their members "starred." Consequently, the possibility of finding a suitable member without a "star" is smaller in those institutions.

Dr. Browne is right in only one point, namely, that there is a chance of the accidental omission of the name of a deserving young scientist by the group which makes the preliminary nominations from which the "voting list" is drawn up. I have thought about this for many years and am now emboldened to make a suggestion which has been running through my mind for some time—that is, that the editors of the directory before asking for nominations from those already having "stars" in a given field write to the heads of important institutions, whether they are starred or not, asking for suggestions. To this plan could be added Dr. Browne's plan of including a certain number of scientists on the basis of what might be called their "bulk productivity" over a definite period of years. This preliminary list could be assembled and sent to the "starred" scientist with a request that he check not over twenty-five of the names and add enough nominations of his own to make a total of twenty-five indicated as his preference. Then the selection could go ahead as in the past. Another suggestion is that an additional balloting be taken so that the cutting down of the number of nominees should be made more gradually and consequently more selectively. I would insist that the final choice should be continued as at present, namely, by those already "starred." It is not possible to obtain any impersonal method which is a substitute for judgment.

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I HAVE followed with some interest the comments concerning the methods of "starring" in "American Men of Science" which have appeared recently in SCIENCE. The remarks by C. A. Browne in the September 24th issue are well taken, but it seems to me that he too has missed the crux of the problem.

I presume most scientific men use the directory for the same reasons that I, as a publisher, do—as a work of reference and information and not as a book which grades scholarship. In this connection, the remarks of the editor in the preface to the first edition concerning the process of "starring" are singularly pertinent.

It would seem that the "starring" was meant to be the basis of an original study and inquiry for the purpose of securing data for a statistical study of the conditions, performance, traits, etc., of a large group of men of science, and these results were to be included in the first edition of "American Men of Science." It is probably fortunate that they were not included. Even more, it was probably impossible to combine the two aims, which are diverse and should remain so. A volume such as "American Men of Science" should be more factual and informative than critical, more descriptive than analytical. A certain discrimination in the selection of individuals must, of course, be exercised and the editors must reserve the right to select the form of the biographical notices and what facts should be included in each biography, such as the vital statistics, education, memberships, institutional connections, and a general statement, in very brief form, of research.

"American Men of Science" should be a directory and record.

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SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

ORNAMENTAL PLANTS

Diseases and Pests of Ornamental Plants. BERNARD O. DODGE and HAROLD W. RICKETT. 638 pp. Illus. The Jaques Cattell Press. 1943. $6.50.

IN the course of the past six or seven decades an extensive literature has accumulated concerning the diseases and pests of cultivated plants and forest trees. Many books in the English language, both popular and technical, relating to the enemies of certain plant groups, *e.g.*, cereals, vegetables, fruits and shade trees, are available, not to mention the hundreds of bulletins and circulars issued by various governmental agencies. Yet, despite the universal culture of flowers and other ornamental plants by homemakers and the tremendous investment involved in commercial floriculture, only a few bulletins relating specifically to the troubles of ornamental plants, and no comprehensive books in English, have been available. Ornamental horticulturists and scientists, who have long felt the need for such a book, will therefore welcome the work of Dodge and Rickett,