nauseam, the second almost never. I am not proposing a moral judgment about the opinion itself, whether it is desirable, or reprehensible, or should be accepted as inevitable. But I have long held a moral opinion about the use of the first part of the statement without the second: it is dishonest and callous. Publishing it as the "predominant view" calls for some kind of challenge, since it reflects so unfavorably on the intelligence and moral sensitivity of the scientific community. . . .

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UFO Phenomena

The letters by Branscomb and Herbison-Evans (27 Sept.) present an interesting contrast in approach to UFO research. Branscomb lays down the challenge, "Find the body of . . . evidence (not proof) that the nature of some UFO's is sufficiently extraordinary to be deserving of the serious attention of the scientific community . . . ," while Herbison-Evans suggests two inexpensive devices that might be employed in observing an anomalistic phenomenon if and when it is witnessed. As Branscomb states, ". . . the rationality of science is at stake." The rules of reason and of science indicate that when apparently anomalistic data are obtained it is useful to analyze them and if there is no obvious explanation for the data, then new data should be collected or new theories developed to account for the anomalous phenomenon.

Although some reasonably hard movie-film data exist, they are of poor quality due to the apparatus employed in obtaining them. Herbison-Evans has a suggestion to alleviate this difficulty. It is my guess that the Condon report will indicate that only a very few UFO cases remain unexplained and that there is no compelling evidence for any "supernatural" phenomena. I feel the proper approach is to condition the scientific response to the magnitude of the problem. Certainly I would not advocate a NASA-sized effort unless a very unusual event took place—especially if I am correctly anticipating the Condon report.

The anomalistic data so far observed may be meteorites spiraling into Earth's atmosphere, atmospheric plasmas, entering comets, or intelligently controlled extraterrestrial spacecraft. Possibly even a combination of an unusual and not yet understood atmospheric phenomenon (that is sometimes not rationally or correctly reported because of numerous psychological factors) is the basis for many of the unexplained reports. In my view, a modest expenditure of effort in modifying surveillance-radar software, in employing apparatus such as that suggested by Herbison-Evans, and in low-cost, special-purpose surveillance systems would be sufficient. We should recognize that there may be some practical value to be gained in such research programs. What if the Tunguska event of 1908 repeated itself without benefit of the prior study of entering comets—a study that had been abandoned because of a UFO taint? What if studies of ball lightning and St. Elmo's fire are similarly rejected and fires resulting from coronal-discharge plasma balls (as occurred in Los Angeles recently) are not prevented because observations of anomalistic plasmalike phenomena are not taken seriously? Who can say at this stage that anomalistic observational phenomena are not deserving of attention?

If, as Branscomb writes, "Scientists will sooner or later realize that the credibility of science and its leading practitioners is suffering from the irrationality of the public debate itself," then I would say that the realization will not come in the form of an out-of-hand rejection of all UFO reports, but rather it will come from a more careful scientific analysis of the phenomena until they are identified and understood.

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Metric System Wins Over British

Perhaps it would be well to point out once again that the real advantage for the United States in adopting the metric system is becoming more and more apparent. Scientists who have been disappointed at the apparent lack of progress should take heart. The issue has by no means died down, despite the formidable expense to industry of conversion to metric measurements. It is ironical that the country from which we acquired our system of inches and pounds long ago realized the necessity to change to the metric system. The 1966 official British committee, which was appointed to aid in conversion, published its report in July 1968. The changeover, scheduled to begin in 1970, is expected to be largely completed by 1975. Already about 90 percent of the world population employs this system. Now seems to be the time to accelerate our own changeover by writing to our congressmen.

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Smog Comes on Little Cat Feet

Boffey's intuition serves him well. He correctly surmised that the term "smog" was coined to mean a combination of smoke and fog ("Smog: Los Angeles running hard, standing still," 6 Sept., p. 990). The inventor was a member of the health department in Chicago in the '20's. He was concerned with the loss of solar ultraviolet rays by absorption in the stable colloid formed in air by the combination of smoke from bituminous coal and the frequent fog in that sometimes fair city. He standardized the oxalic acid method of determining ultraviolet light and did some fine work in measuring diurnal and geographic variations. I regret that I don't recall the name of this pioneer. . . .

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During the years 1927–31 under the Commissioner of Health Arnold H. Kegel, the division of research of the bureau of laboratories and research made tests for ultraviolet light in sunshine. The results were published (*1*, *2*), and the authors used the term "smog" when describing a haze produced by smoke mixing with the prevailing fog. The method of measuring the effect of the ultraviolet light on uranium salts by use of a standard oxalic acid solution was described in the second paper (*2*). We regret that we do not have reprints of these articles.

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