Letters

Surrender to the SST

Most readers would probably agree that the SST should not be routinely flown over populated areas. But some of us, at least, have seen no great harm in flights across the ocean or the polar regions. Shurcliff (Letters, 11 Apr.) appears to consider even transoceanic flights as unacceptable. As a seagoing scientist, I find it difficult to be alarmed by this prospect. The probability of intersection of the sonic-boom zone of a transoceanic SST with that of a given ship must be sufficiently small that the danger of "day-and-night jolting" is minute. Certainly, on the average research vessel the sound level is already so high that occasional sonic boom might come as a relief.

Nor do I find Lynn's point about the circadian rhythm very convincing. Business firms require their travelers to recuperate for a few days after a long flight, but this practice is not widespread among those of us who travel for governments or universities. After one good night's sleep, I find myself working as efficiently (or inefficiently) as ever. The circadian problem will be no worse with a shorter flight, and there may even be more time available for recuperative sleep.

The SST is on its way. If such planes are not built in the United States, we will fly those built in Europe. The problem that requires attention is to insure that these planes fly on appropriate routes and regularly avoid populated regions.

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I read Shurcliff's letter with interest and also with dismay. If the Citizens League Against the Sonic Boom thinks that the issue of the SST is going to be decided on its objective merits, I suggest they study the continuing betrayal of the citizens of Santa Barbara and neighboring communities by the Department of the Interior.

There is no point in discussing the SST objectively, because for every objective testimony against it, the Federal Aviation Administration will produce not one, but several, captive experts with affirmative views. This is a political problem, pure and simple—the problem of bringing under effective control a government bureaucracy that is now effectively autonomous. Nobody wants the SST except the FAA and the major members of the aircraft industry. My prediction, I am sorry to say, is that they will get it.

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University Governments: Elected and Accountable

Bryce Nelson writes ("Brandeis: How a liberal university reacts to a black take-over," 28 Mar., p. 1431) that "student protest may eventually force out 'liberal' administrators, but in their place are likely to emerge not radicals, but men who will practice repression, not reconciliation." I think he overlooks a third alternative, which many members of American academic communities might prefer. This would be the elimination of the present type of university administrator, whether he be liberal, radical, or repressive, and the conversion of the administered university to self-government. Presidents, deans, and department chairmen would be elected, for stated terms, by their constituencies—including, in suitable proportions, students, faculty, alumni, and neighboring communities. These elected officers would conduct themselves as agents accountable to their constituents. They would have the help of nonacademic "civil servants," like bursars, registrars, and supervisors of buildings and grounds.

Proposals for university self-government are often rejected on grounds of the "irresponsible behavior" of faculties. If this charge is justified, that may be so because our faculties have in fact had their responsibilities limited to the "merely academic," excluding even the departmental budget. The best way to breed habits of responsibility is through the exercise of responsibility. It seems, at any rate, worth a try. I find it hard to believe that the self-governing university could be worse managed than the administered university we know today.

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Page Charges and Tight Budgets

The practice, by most scientific journals in this country, of imposing page charges on authors of papers is an expedient, at best. It spares the publishers from seeking direct subsidies from their sponsoring bodies or the federal government, and removes the necessity of raising subscription rates to cover the costs of publication. Page charges have been met up to now only because most investigators could budget for them from government grants. Lamont-Havers (Letters, 14 Feb.) confirms the propriety of those charges.

However, federal grants, even those already approved and funded, are being cut by some 10 to 25 percent. An investigator must now decide whether his ongoing research is more important than the need for publishing reports of completed work. This choice will narrow down to the question of whether or not present staff should be kept at work despite reductions in funds. At the same time, rising living costs must also be met from these reduced budgets. In my own case, the choice will be in favor of maintaining staff.

Instead of postponing publication, the investigator may beg off from paying page charges by effectively declaring as a pauper; or he may publish in those foreign journals that do not, as yet, impose page charges. I would imagine that neither of these courses will be satisfactory to editors of American journals. In the next few years, as this situation persists, some of the journals with larger circulations may

meet all or most of the cost by raising subscription rates. Some are organs of societies that have comfortable publication reserves. Perhaps an effort to obtain direct subsidies may be the most feasible and equitable solution. These might be administered by a special committee of the National Academy of Sciences. Subsidies on a continuing basis will have to come from the government, but as an emergency measure some of the foundations might be willing to contribute to maintain the quality and quantity of American scientific publications.

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The University in Many Mirrors

C. West Churchman has taken the opportunity in his review of *The Closed Corporation: American Universities in Crisis* (14 Feb., p. 664) to drag his own soapbox to Sather Gate. Despite his oversimplified references to public figures, I applaud most of his pronouncements. His final question "What is a university?" is certainly the most important question to ask. Individual answers will range from a laboratory-library concept of detached experimentation and ascetic activity to describing an orgy of collective involvement in controversial issues of the moment. Also, the pictures of the ideal student-teacher relationship will vary from one showing a harsh master-apprentice arrangement to one in which teacher and student are depicted as soul brothers engaged in an intense inquiry into the ultimate meaning of everything.

Whatever visions develop for the ideal university, however, vast amounts of support in money and goodwill are needed. Concerning this point, Churchman appears to be unrealistic. We simply cannot ignore the feelings of the "majority of the electorate." The electorate has yet to be convinced that universities possess divine insight into their own worthiness. Until such a day arrives, both public and private universities must temper idealism with more than just a grudging awareness of public opinion. Hypocrisy need not result. The electorate has long ago adjusted to the general fact that students and professors do not agree with many or, in the electorate's mind, most of the current political, moral, and religious convictions. The electorate will never adjust,