try is taken to task for being caught in an equivalent situation and criticized as ". . . complacent, and slow to adopt the basic oxygen furnace." In fact, the problem of growing imports of steel and ethylene have practically nothing to do with technology but everything to do with economics. Wages in the steel industry in the United States in 1967 were two and one-half times greater than those in Europe and four times greater than those in Japan. Those ratios may be even higher today. With equivalent technology and equipment, and roughly equivalent raw material costs, the competitive advantage to the foreigners is obvious. The high cost of labor may be a factor in the ethylene problem, but it applies even more significantly to the steel industry, where labor makes up a larger ingredient of the finished product. The very newest steel plants, constructed with the finest technology now available (including not only the basic oxygen furnace but many other innovations not so widely publicized) still can't cope with prices quoted from abroad —primarily because of the labor factor. In addition, some foreign governments make it even harder to compete by providing their steel and chemical industries with much more liberal tax laws and depreciation allowances, sometimes even subsidies, while they tax heavily or completely bar imports from the United States.

The problem is difficult. I'm afraid it's going to get worse before it gets better. Textiles, glass, electronics, steel, and now petro-chemicals are facing it. Soon the automotive industry will hurt even more. As foreign plant facilities continue to improve, who knows where it will end? As long as the wide wage discrepancy exists, and as long as our government refuses to provide suitable protection for our basic industries which make these high wages and our enviable standard of living possible, the "foundations of prosperity" will surely continue to crumble.

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Impoverished Latin American Science

As a scientist who has worked to improve Latin American science, I would like to reaffirm Nussenzveig's concern ("Migration of scientists from Latin America," 26 Sept., p. 1328). In addi-

tion to the short-range solutions he suggests, some thought should be given to upgrading the almost nonexistent science education in the elementary and secondary schools in many of the countries of Latin America. In most of these, elementary and secondary school teachers are not educated at the national universities but at normal schools which are directly under control of the office of the Minister of Education. The science teachers at many of these normal schools are often ill-trained and out of the mainstream of what is going on in world science education. Although Nussenzveig mentions the "archaic structure" of Latin American universities, more emphasis should be placed on departmentalizing the basic science disciplines.

The first chemistry department to serve as the central body of the university charged with the teaching of basic chemistry to all faculties was established at the University of Concepción in Chile in 1960. This archaic structure basically sets the misconstrued pattern that fundamental science is nothing more than a tool to medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and civil engineering. Latin American projects supported by the United States and the Organization of American States were making contributions to the improvement of science education but with the current budget cutbacks in Washington, it will require a tremendous effort to recover lost ground, not to mention ever moving ahead.

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Perils of Flying

I continue to read with great interest your news items on the hazards and discontinuation of the use of DDT. Why is it then that on our recent return flight from Europe the stewardess walked along the aisle spraying us all —according to a government regulation —with what she told me was DDT?

Even without the concern over DDT, I would like to know the supposed rationale of such an obviously ineffective but irritating ritual.

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