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Perhaps Arctic Alaska, because it is being opened at a time of national awareness of pollution and conservation problems, can serve as a laboratory for the development of techniques and a philosophy of rational exploitation without ruination.

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Reno: Appraisal of DRI

The short article "Trouble at Nevada research center" (29 Aug., p. 880) errs in that it presents an incomplete picture of the research climate at Nevada. The Desert Research Institute at Reno, from which Wendell A. Mordy was asked to resign last spring, is only one branch of the University of Nevada system which also includes the Reno campus, the Las Vegas campus, and the computing center. The article gives the impression that the difficulties and the resignation of Mordy were due to a conflict between two strong-willed men over monetary policies, that research at the university was the loser, and that the university chancellor was the villain.

Actually, the trouble goes much deeper. At the time DRI was authorized in 1960, several academic departments of the university at Reno were beginning to develop Ph.D. programs. It was understood that DRI would encourage research within the academic departments of the university, help build up research competence and potential by attracting outstanding personnel, and help procure research grants and contracts, along with some administrative duties.

DRI started to do some of these things, but before long began to spend all its efforts on building up its own research projects, sometimes in direct competition with established programs. Eventually it split off from the university at Reno and became an entity in itself as a separate branch of the university system. (The conflict over the administration of the computing center arose at that time.) One of its original purposes—that of stimulating research within academic departments—was either discontinued or at least cut to a minimum. Administration of grants and contracts was turned back to the university.

As a result, Mordy's relationships with faculty members on the Reno campus left much to be desired. Many of us feel that very few of the academic

departments have benefited appreciably, except in an indirect manner, by the existence of the DRI. Some have even suffered. We feel that so much more could have been done to benefit research throughout the university system if the administration of the DRI had been different, and we are not convinced that the resignation of Mordy will have an adverse effect on established research on the Reno or Las Vegas campuses.

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Postage Meter Technology

In his letter Feeny (3 Oct.), exhorts his fellow scientists to use commemorative postage stamps on their letters. In this way, he reasons, one adds sparkle to his mail and, possibly, vitality to his publications. Aside from these gains, there may also be an educational benefit arguing for the use of postage stamps rather than metered mail.

When your secretary mails a half-ounce airmail letter for you to a colleague located say, at the University College of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, she must affix 25 cents postage to the envelope. Given a postage meter this is done quite simply by engaging the lever for 25 cents. However, using postage stamps it becomes necessary to affix four 6-cent stamps and a 1-cent stamp, two 10's and a 5, or some other combination totaling 25 cents. This operation requires that she reinforce her skill in arithmetic, a proficiency which might well become vestigial by continuously relying upon the postage meter. For this reason alone—the educational value of reinforcing basic quantitative skills—we should encourage the use of ordinary postage stamps and resist mulishly the stealthy inroads of postage meter technology!

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... Unfortunately, our institution discovered years ago that some of our correspondence was not getting through because of postage stamp thieves. We use a machine stamp and now our losses are almost nil.

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