

... The real error is not in the mistreatment of Bingham, but in hiring him in the first place. Perhaps Congress should look into Civil Service practices which permit that sort of character to get into government work. Certainly that "Bingham is a Quaker, a pacifist, a conscientious objector, and a believer in what he calls 'anarchistic socialism'" was known to the personnel people before he was hired, or should have been. ... The information that he had "held a variety of jobs" should have indicated also that there was considerable question about his potential to perform well. ...

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I read with distress Philip Boffey's description of the vigilante and other activity directed against Warren Bingham.

... Violent or coercive reactions to different ideologies should be totally inconsistent with the ideals of the scientific community. Apparently they are not. We claim that our shield against ignorance is reason and the willingness to discuss ideas. Unyielding prejudice must not be our Achilles' heel. This country appears to be fast approaching the time when it will be dangerous both to think independently and be vocal about it.

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Radio Astronomers! United They Stand . . .

Alan Moffet and his colleagues have properly voiced concern over the sad state of affairs with regard to future radio astronomy instrumentation in this country (Letters, 19 June). However, events of the past 10 or 15 years might shed some light on why there are no plans for major instruments in this country.

Since the inception of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in the mid-1950's, it has been virtually impossible to get any two radio astronomers to agree on anything regarding facilities unless they were both from the same institution and even then there was often disagreement. Had it not been for Lloyd Berkner's organizational and promotional genius, which was of an order of magnitude greater

than others on the scene at the time, NRAO probably would not exist today. There will be some who would state today that we would be better off without NRAO.

The reports of advisory committees from the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Foundation, and, most recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration have nearly always listed 10 to 15 major instruments, all either praised or damned with faint praise. Many individuals went home and submitted proposals to the funding agencies based on their own contributions to the committee report. The Owens Valley 130-foot radio telescope is the only proposal of which I am aware that has been funded via this route, but, in addition, plans were well laid by capable people independently of any committee. Perhaps the most ironic example is the case where scientists who failed to lend adequate support to the Navy's 600-foot Sugar Grove radio telescope on scientific grounds submitted their own proposal for an equally complex instrument, only to have it die in the Bureau of the Budget.

The moral should be clear. So long as radio astronomers remain divided and permit institutional ties to overshadow science, and I will take my share of the blame, they will not obtain major funding. If they could unreservedly present a united front, funding could probably be obtained for one or two major national facilities. ...

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Rubric in Arabic

Being a dropout from an Arabic language course and a casualty of Arabic lettering, it was with renewed hopes that I read Ruth L. Barr's report on an easy new method of "Embossing Arabic letters and numbers on new raised-line polyethylene paper: An aid for the blind" (3 July, p. 94). I was just about to purchase a supply of No. 300 polyethylene paper when I sadly realized that while the numerals that the new technique refers to may be Arabic, indeed, the letters are hopelessly Latin.

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