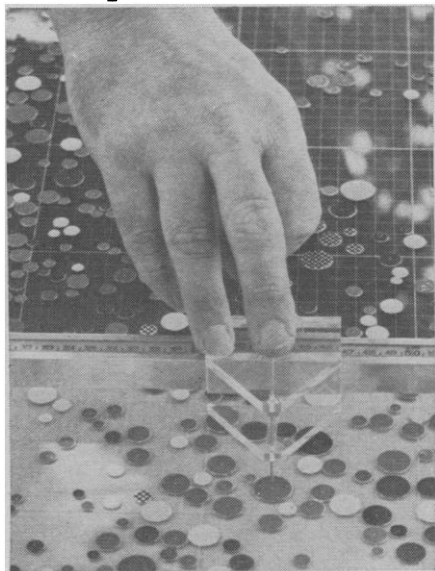


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that the world owed them a living while they pursued their own personal interests. We are the fools who opened Rutherford's Pandora's box, and in so doing we deified ourselves as his inheritors. And now, from our Mount Olympus, we scold a disenchanted citizenry which is beginning to question our godliness in telling it how to live and work so that it can continue to meet our presumptuous demands for bigger and better ivory towers. We are indeed obsessed—with ourselves as *Scientists*.

ETHEL WARD McLEMORE
11625 Wander Lane,
Dallas, Texas 75230

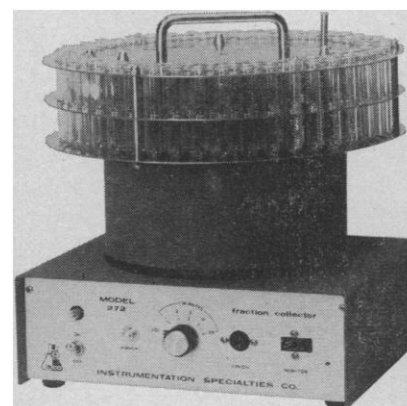
DDT and Safer Substitutes

In response to Hoffman (Letters, 10 July), it is not at all surprising that "the greatest losses to growers of sweet cherries and grapes have been due to an increasing population of birds, rather than a decreasing population." It is a basic principle of ecology that oversimplification of an ecosystem (that is, by intensive agricultural or residential use of land) results in a decrease in the diversity of the community, but an increase in the numbers of those species which tolerate the changed environment. Insect pests of agriculture are generated in just this manner. The fact that in New York State populations of native birds such as robins, orioles, catbirds, and grackles are reaching pest proportions should be a clear warning that severe damage has occurred.

Pesticides and other pollutants are by no means the only factors which contribute to this simplification, but there is no question that they are having effect. Joseph W. Still (same issue) claims that there has been "irresponsible slander of DDT . . ." but he then joins the ranks of the irresponsible by referring to "isolated and loosely reasoned claims about brown pelicans, bald eagles, and so forth. . . ." I suggest that Still take a second look at the number of reports in the scientific literature and the reasoning behind them. They are neither isolated nor loosely reasoned.

I know of no ecologist who is unaware of the benefits of DDT to human health and agriculture; to argue that DDT has not saved lives and increased crop production would be foolish. The disturbing fact is that we are just beginning to understand the subtle ef-

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fects of DDT on living organisms, despite the fact that the compound has been used commercially for more than 20 years. Most ecologists are not demanding complete abstinence from the use of pesticides; these chemicals are absolutely essential to the production of food in quantity by our current agricultural system. What the ecologists are asking is that, where nonpersistent substitutes for DDT are available, they be used. Granted, the cost of these substitutes is usually higher than that of DDT, and this cost would undoubtedly be passed on to the consumer. But I submit that the continued use of chemicals such as DDT is the greatest act of ecological irresponsibility, especially in light of the fact that safer substitutes are available.

ERIC V. JOHNSON

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Energy without Pollution

I strongly concur with John N. Nasikas, chairman of the Federal Power Commission, who was quoted in "Energy crisis: Environmental issue exacerbates power supply problem" (26 June, p. 1554) about the need for a comprehensive energy policy to effect balanced objectives of efficient utilization of our energy resources in harmony with the environment. I do not confine this concern to the United States either.

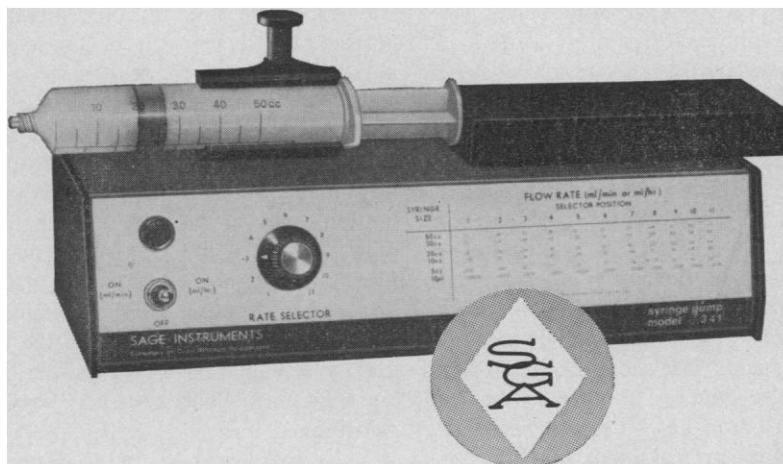
The amount spent on research and development for electrical power generation utilizing fossil fuels is pitifully small. We must increase our efficiencies in conversion to electrical energy, as well as to utilize the thermal energy presently being rejected. Although the article was concerned mainly with electrical energy (about $\frac{1}{5}$ of the energy utilized in the United States), the conclusions are applicable to all forms of energy: we need better utilization of all energy resources—for example, a transit system more energy-efficient than the present individual automobile. . . .

DANIEL BERG

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Westinghouse Electric Corporation,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15235*

. . . Boffey in his article briefly alludes to what may prove to be the only truly successful long-term solution—the development of controlled thermonuclear power. In view of pollution problems

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