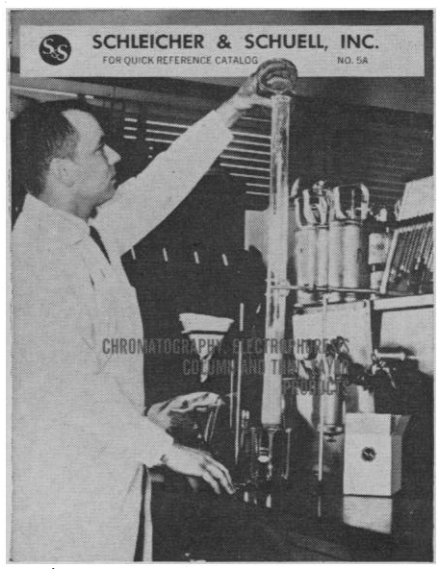


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Transliteration of Cyrillic Characters" as prescribed by the International Organization for Standardization. Granted that N'juton and Čerč for Newton and Church are abominations that should have been corrected by the editors or even the proofreaders of the volume in question, the fact remains that Russian scientific authors, when citing non-Russian literature, still seem (in general) to avoid the obvious palliative of giving both the original name and a Russian transliteration, at least in the bibliographies if not in the text. Surely this is a matter that the AAAS, *inter alia*, could take up with the competent authorities in the U.S.S.R.

SEV S. FLUSS

4, Chemin de Tavernay,
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Nobel Prizes

The recent death of fourfold Nobel-late Herbert McLeane Evans suggests that it might be pertinent to raise a question regarding the value to our culture of the Nobel prizes. Quite obvious are apparent misjudgments both in omission and in commission. Yet, committees being human and ever operating on the compromise of the least common denominator of agreement, the record of over 70 years of awards is impressive in the effort to reward merit. Is the effort socially beneficial, or is it even necessary that merit receive reward beyond itself?

It may now be time, however, to propose that the Nobel prizes are outliving their social usefulness. Choices are ever more difficult. There are ever more worthy candidates. There seems to be a growing unpleasant competitiveness between rival scientific groups or between rival national literary cliques. In science, this engenders unseemly scrambles for priority. In general, this rivalry jeopardizes the ideals of scientific or literary endeavor. Political considerations may cloud choices.

In addition, while many awardees remain pleasant and cheerful, others tend to become arrogant, authoritative, and autocratic. There may be a built-in snobbishness in the whole Nobel prize business. My strictures apply to most other awards.

Perhaps I am quite wrong in my critique. If so, I welcome the opportunity to be set right. As of now, however, I think the Nobel and similar prize

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money would add more to our cultural progress by being given to promising scientists or writers, to help them in completing worthy works, than by being given to people for work, no matter how worthy, which is already finished.

CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE

*Department of Pharmacology,
University of California,
San Francisco 94122*

Federal Land Releases

On 13 April over half the 3600-acre site of Argonne National Laboratory was abruptly declared to be excess federal property. This was an important step in the physical dismantling of an important national resource. Argonne is a multi-program laboratory established 25 years ago by the Atomic Energy Commission and charged with special responsibilities for the development of nuclear power reactors. The land release at Argonne accelerates the transfer of responsibility for research and development in nuclear power to private enterprise. Moreover, the loss of control over the released land, which completely encloses the developed laboratory site, greatly reduces Argonne's flexibility in the choice of programmatic responsibilities and prevents it from continuing, much less expanding, its ecological efforts. Recent land releases have also been reported at Brookhaven National Laboratory and at the Savannah River facility of the Atomic Energy Commission.

An important mechanism for the control of federal programs by executive action can be recognized in the authority of the Property Review Board, established last year by executive order to make recommendations to the President regarding the use or disposal of federal property. The use of executive power to reduce the level of effort and to alter the priorities in federal programs is a subject of increasing concern. Immediate congressional investigations seem to be essential to reveal (i) policy and program changes that are entailed in these and other administrative decisions about changes in land use and (ii) the extent to which the provisions of section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) are being followed in these actions.

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