able that describes resting heart rates in rats as a function of age and mature body size.

This is a request, then, to all scientists who maintain rat colonies to send to us information describing (i) the genetic background of their colony, (ii) resting heart rate, body weight, and age of animal when the data were collected, for as many different ages as possible, (iii) an estimate of the normal systolic blood pressure in the mature animal, and (iv) comments on any extenuating circumstances that might prevent the data from being typical, such as environmental stress, unusual temperatures, or malnutrition. This information would be greatly appreciated and will be used to maximum advantage. Readers interested in helping who do not have active colonies can pass this request along to those who are able to respond. All responders will be sent copies of any final compilations.

THOMAS G. COLEMAN

Department of Physiology and Biophysics, School of Medicine, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson 39216

A New Metric System

I am pleased to note the strong effort *Science* is making to convert measurements in its pages completely to the metric system. Other scientific and engineering publications should do likewise. The sooner the whole country converts the better. Scientists should be able to change easily, and engineers can understand the arguments, despite their present adherence to the English system. The problem is to persuade the great mass of nontechnical people that they should change to the metric system. The difficulty with nontechnical people is more semantic than technical. They will be afraid of, and certainly resistant to, strange technical-sounding names which they will be asked to use instead of the familiar inch, foot, pound, and so forth.

I suggest, therefore, that a different approach be used, and that the new system be advertised as an "improvement" over the old. We should present a "new inch" (2.5 centimeters); a "new foot" (30 centimeters); a "new yard" (1 meter); a "new mile" (1500 meters)—already called the Olympic mile by sportswriters; a "new ounce" (weight) (30 grams); a "new pound" (0.5 kilogram); a "new ton" (1 megagram); a "new ounce" (volume) (30 milliliters); a "new pint" (0.5 liter); a "new quart" (1 liter), and so forth.

The nontechnical public need not be pressed with the metric equivalents. It would be sufficient to describe the new system as follows: the "new inch" and "new foot" are each about 2 percent larger than the corresponding old units. The "new yard" is about 9 percent larger than the old. The "new mile" is about 7 percent smaller than the old. The "new ounce" (weight) is about 6 percent larger than the old (avoirdupois). The "new pound" is about 10 percent larger than the old (avoirdupois). The "new ton" is about 2 percent smaller than the old "long ton." The "new ounce" (volume) is about 1 percent larger than the old. The "new pint," the "new quart," and the "new gallon" are each 6 percent larger than the old (United States, liquid). I suggest ignoring English units that are not widely used and eliminating differences between "liquid" and "dry," and "avoirdupois," since these distinctions are not widely appreciated by the nontechnical public anyway. The conversion factors between the new units become

12 new inches = 1 new foot
40 new inches = 3⅓ new feet = 1 new yard
5000 new feet = 1500 new yards = 1 new mile
16⅔ new ounces (weight) = 1 new pound
2000 new pounds = 1 new ton
16⅔ new ounces (volume) = 1 new pint
2 new pints = 1 new quart
4 new quarts = 1 new gallon

Besides the look of familiarity, the new units can have another selling point in that their sizes are for the most part a little larger than the old sizes. The housewife purchasing cloth by the yard, potatoes by the pound, or milk by the quart will be glad to be getting more than with the old units. Merchants can advertise this benefit, while any added price will be largely hidden among the regular rises due to inflation. Once the technical conversion has been made, the new old names can be phased out in another generation or two.

DON DEVAULT

Department of Biophysics and Physical Biochemistry, Johnson Research Foundation, School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 19174