

## Discover's Advertisements

It made me sad to see you sniping at *Discover* magazine in your 1 December issue (Briefings, p. 1116). Yes, there are ads we carry, generally toward the back of the magazine, that tout products and services we would never endorse in our editorial pages. And the reason we do so should be obvious to anyone who works in publishing. It is an economic necessity.

As the briefing mentions, we are the last of the "lay science magazines" launched in the 1980s; the others are gone because their owners could not afford to continue putting them out. Your parent organization, the AAAS, knows this all too well, although you choose to pretend otherwise in your diatribe. *Discover* did not "Pac-man" *Science* '86; the AAAS simply gave up on its award-winning publication, shopped it around town, and then sold it to Time Inc., knowing full well that the magazine would be folded—a decision that hardly contributed to the advancement of science.

Unlike *Science*, which can thrive on ads for scientific equipment and job openings, there is no endemic advertising for a magazine like ours. It has been an uphill struggle convincing Madison Avenue that the readers of a science magazine are anything more than slide-rule-toting nerds who drive used Volkswagens, distill their own liquor, and can't tell a crouton from a proton. The science magazines that were folded obviously lost this struggle. We are beginning to win it. After 9 years and losses of \$70 million, *Discover* was finally in the black in 1988, under its new owner, Family Media.

The AAAS should be supporting *Discover*, not knocking us. Need I be so crass and say the obvious: most science is publicly funded, and public support of science depends on the public's continuing interest and knowledge. You're cutting your own throat. The public doesn't read *Science*; they read *Discover*. As the largest general-interest science magazine in America, we are the scientific community's biggest champion. We reach 5 million readers each month and, contrary to your elitist sniveling, they are not "the great unwashed," but 5 million intelligent men and women eager to follow what's happening on the frontiers of science. They'd have a harder time doing this without us.

And we couldn't exist without advertising—it's that simple. Surely scientists (your readers) should know that compromises are often necessary to achieve essential funding.

At least our compromises are clear. There is a separation of advertising and editorial pages as well defined as the separation between Church and State. The publisher chooses the ads, and I, as editor in chief, choose the editorial. I print whatever I think is important in our editorial pages without regard to how it might affect our advertising revenues. (Indeed, we ran a story ridiculing precisely the type of subliminal-learning tapes whose advertisements you delight in holding against us.)

Come say hello to the real world, guys.

PAUL HOFFMAN

Editor in Chief,

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I was glad to see your piece on "New Age Nobelists" reporting on the awful ads for pseudoscience now regularly appearing in *Discover*, a magazine supposedly committed to raising the level of public understanding of science.

I write to say that because of these ads I asked that my name be removed from *Discover*'s masthead, where I have long been listed as a contributing editor. I have no intention of contributing again to the magazine as long as its business staff insists on taking money for such garbage. I wish that others still on the masthead would do likewise.

I feel sorry for Paul Hoffman, the editor (formerly with *Scientific American*), who I am sure is as distressed by the advertising as the magazine's readers who are not scientific illiterates. When Leon Jaroff was editor, he would never have kowtowed to the advertising department.

MARTIN GARDNER

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## Soviet Sociology

As editor emeritus of the translation journals *Soviet Sociology* and *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology*, and as someone who has been following Soviet social science closely over my entire professional career, may I offer certain needed corrections and amplifications to Constance Holden's generally excellent article "Soviet sociology makes a comeback" (News & Comment, 24 Nov., p. 991)?

It is erroneous to suggest that sociologists like Tatiana Zaslavskaja, Vladimir Iadov, and Igor Kon were banished to outer darkness during "the Brezhnev era" and are only now being brought back. To begin with,

this is not a fair description of Novosibirsk or Leningrad—except insofar as neither one of them is Moscow. Second, all of these scholars, and many others as well, continued to publish in their field during what Soviet writers are now calling the "period of stagnation," even though certain matters had to be treated with caution. During my 24-year tenure as editor of *Soviet Sociology*, which ended in 1987, I tried to make the best of this work available in English, covering with special thoroughness certain fields, such as ethnosociology, that were and still are distinctively Soviet and are not usually found in the English-language literature.

Soviet sociology in its present form is actually a product of the early Brezhnev era, before stagnation set in—not of the Khrushchev era. There were two Brezhnev eras, not one: Leonid Brezhnev came to power with a Gorbachev-style program of glasnost and renewal—although it was markedly less bold, particularly on the economic side, than what Gorbachev is now attempting. For various complex reasons, Brezhnev was unable to put this program through, and he in effect capitulated to the bureaucracy. However, it is worth noting that the major Soviet sociological journal, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* (*Sociological Research*), was not established until 1974, when the stagnation was already largely in effect. Despite this it remained, in my opinion, one of the more interesting Soviet scholarly journals: almost every issue contained something revealing and critical, on some level, with respect to some part of the system, which is more than many American social science journals can claim.

The "comeback" of Soviet sociology is indeed significant, but it should not be thought that it sprang full-blown, like Athena, out of Gorbachev's head. The present boom in Soviet sociology is essentially one of those cyclical movements characteristic of any scientific field, by which interest in the field increases with dramatic suddenness and then eventually retreats.

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## Soviet Alcoholism

Constance Holden's article "Soviets seek U.S. help in combating alcoholism" (News & Comment, 17 Nov., p. 878) was interesting, but I certainly hope that Boris Levin's remarks were abbreviated.