

metric units to compete on European and other world markets. Some American manufacturers have decided that on the basis of production efficiency alone they would be better off using the metric system.

It would seem very likely, even if hard to prove, that the great technological successes of Germany, Japan, and the U.S.S.R., and more recently of France and Italy, are attributable in part to their use of the metric system, and that our successes have been *in spite of* using a less efficient system. Steps toward legislation for adopting the metric system in the U.S. should not be allowed to lag because of indifference, reluctance to change, or arguments based on the cost of the change-over. Scientists, already exposed to the benefits of the system, should take the lead in this movement.

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#### Authors: Call to Arms

Bravo to Page (Letters, 12 Mar., p. 1241)! I agree with him on all points, but I believe that more serious measures for improving the evaluation of papers by referees should be taken.

Authors should organize for self-defense against referees. The organization should publish those remarks of referees that are found to be unjust by an assembly of judges. Credits and demerits of journals (Letters, 28 May, p. 1174) should be publicized. Decisions to boycott journals that behave heedlessly should be taken, and prizes be given to journals that deserve them.

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For solving the problems caused by multiple junior authors, I suggest the typographical version of the Latin *et cetera*—&c. Or the ampersand may be better combined with a natural—&5, &15, and so forth. Ayars's suggestion (Letters, 25 June, p. 1669), that such listing obscures the real author(s) of a paper because a department head or major professor imposed his own name, can be countered by an invitation to workers: Arise!

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#### More on Berkeley

In their account of the "extremist" conspiracy at Berkeley, Grendon, Jones, and Petersen (Letters, 4 June, p. 1273) make a central point of a Slate "manifesto for revolution on the campus." They say:

The importance of this revolutionary manifesto is that it was distributed to students at registration time in September, 1964, *before* the occurrence of any of the later incidents which allegedly led to disorders. . . . Thus, Slate announced a revolutionary program in advance of any supposed provocation—a program which it was able to follow almost as a blueprint. . . .

The Byrne Committee, appointed by the Regents, with an appropriation of \$75,000, to investigate the recent unrest within the University of California, and particularly the disturbances on the Berkeley campus, issued its report to the Regents on 7 May; the Regents released it to the press shortly thereafter. This is what the report says concerning the foregoing charge:

Two facts are usually cited by those advancing the "conspiracy" theory. . . . In the SLATE Supplement, Mr. Cleveland urged "revolt" if the University would not change its system of instruction. . . . He did not, by all accounts, play a significant role in instigating, organizing or executing the disturbances, and we conclude that his plea to "revolt" had only a *coincidental relationship* with the "revolt" which actually took place. (Italics added.)

In general, a comparison between the events as reported by Grendon *et al.* and as reported by the Byrne Committee defies any attempt at reconciliation. The Los Angeles *Times* of 12 May describes the Byrne report as follows: "Thousands of pages of interviews and research have been distilled into a document which is 84 pages long, with an additional 18-page bibliography." The full text of the report appeared in this same edition of the *Times*, and excerpts have appeared widely in other newspapers.

Those who have read Langer's reports in *Science* (News and Comment, 9 Apr., p. 198; 16 Apr., p. 346) cannot help being impressed by how well her individual efforts hold up in the light of the exhaustive Byrne investigation. As one who has read closely most of the reports on the Berkeley events, I find the "totally different view" of Grendon *et al.* to be totally without foundation.

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Grendon, Jones, and Petersen would have us believe that the Berkeley unrest was contrived by a group of conspirators. While this is demonstrably possible under certain conditions, as in the feudal societies of South America, is it a plausible thesis in societies of a more democratic nature? . . . I believe that we may be looking at campus unrest in the wrong context. The alert young people of college age, or at least some of them, feel the necessity to protest certain things. The fact is that they are at colleges; hence if they protest, such protests will be at colleges and will involve college institutions; but they need not be directed against a college unless it attempts to thwart the unrest directed toward society. Did this happen at Berkeley?

It behooves the scientific community to understand the mechanisms of social change. . . . Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Phil Ochs, and Joan Baez are speaking to college youth. They have more to tell than their "unorthodox views" on paying taxes, to which Grendon *et al.* refer. Can science give us more insight into this dynamic spirit for change that is appealing to our youth?

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#### Government Records and the Public

Larrabee's remarks (Letters, 28 May, p. 1772) concerning proposed legislation (H.R. 5583) opening federal records "to any person" evoke mixed reactions. All men of good will must applaud what seems to be the general intent of this bill, maximizing the flow of information from the government to the people; this is good in itself, one of the prime sources of real democracy and, incidentally, the lifeblood of science. On the other hand, the bill as described is obviously a clumsy, self-defeating instrument for attaining its purpose. What is needed is a rule of reason that will balance the need to maximize public information against the need to minimize any incidental disruption of the business of government.

It is all too natural for the bureaucrat to try to narrow or choke off his channels of communication with the public, both incoming and outgoing. If he did not try to do so he would not be playing his social role. It is



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therefore important, even essential, that the public bring unremitting and strong counterpressure to bear. Let us hope the present bill will be aborted, but that pressure for a maximum flow of information will continue undiminished. Parenthetically, I understand that the bill currently undergoing committee hearings, apparently identical with Larrabee's citation, H.R. 5583, is numbered H.R. 5012.

Larrabee is apparently concerned primarily with the impact of the proposed bill on the scientific and technologic community. This is natural, given the special audience for your journal. However, in considering questions like this one, is it not a little parochial to claim, even by implication, a special dispensation for the scientist and technologist? Granted there are some aspects of the general problem which are special to science and technology (Larrabee mentions a "right to publish"); these special aspects can be soundly dealt with only in the general context of access to federal records.

There is a voluminous literature on access to records. May I recommend a paper that provides some historical perspective: "Public records"—who knows what they are?" by Oliver W. Holmes [*Am. Archivist* 23, 3 (1960)].

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## Grassland Fires

The recent report regarding grassland vegetation by Wells (9 Apr., p. 246) and the letter by Ehrenfried (28 May, p. 1173) stress the role of man as a cause of fires in the Great Plains region. As a range conservationist with several years of experience in western North and South Dakota, I have had the effectiveness of lightning in starting prairie fires amply demonstrated to me. On many occasions, during the late summer months, lightning started numerous fires over a wide area where I was responsible for fire control, and control measures were necessary to suppress them. On such occasions one could vividly picture the potential of such fires in a time when no fire control agencies existed. In that era such fire-retarding factors or conditions as roads, railways, plowed fields, residential areas, strip mines, and overgrazed rangelands would also have

been absent. That man contributed (and continues to contribute) to the incidence of fires on the Great Plains cannot be denied, but the role of lightning should not be overlooked or slighted.

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## Aristogenics

In the 18 June issue of *Science* (p. 1579), two books were reviewed under the heading "Modifying man: Muller's eugenics and Lederberg's eugenics." Readers who find these books enjoyable or important may be interested to learn of a project which at present is being actively discussed in England and which in many ways may be expected to fit the English milieu particularly well. Briefly, it is proposed to have a bill laid before Parliament which would grant certain eugenical privileges to the aristocracy, of blood and mind. The peerage, including life peers, would under this scheme be allowed polygamous marriages, while knights would be asked to provide semen to a Bank of Superior Genotypes. Gradations of privilege may, under the proposal, be laid down in historical terms for peers, but for knights according to classifications such as the five classes of the Order of the British Empire. Women (married women, for the time being) will presumably be urged to use the Bank by drawing freely on the account of their choice.

Like any human undertaking, the plan in question cannot be expected to appeal to everyone, perhaps not even to all eugenicists. Some no doubt will complain that not all peers or knights are sufficiently superior for the proposed honors. But that argument was conclusively squelched in a recent letter to the *New Statesman* which, referring to the bemedaled Beatles, said: "You see fit to condemn publicly the award of an MBE to four boys who have given more pleasure to more people of all races than, perhaps, anyone ever before." That attitude has become widespread and will presumably give much support to the eugenic scheme, notably among women. Skeptics may wish to turn to an article "Eugenics and utopia" in the spring issue of *Daedalus*.

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