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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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