Letters

Saving Aldabra

Let me join W. R. P. Bourne in expressing gratitude to the *Science* editors for the attention they have given the problem of Aldabra. The Smithsonian has been deeply concerned from the beginning over the possibility of military development on what is certainly the most scientifically interesting atoll in the world oceans.

I cannot, however, agree with Bourne's assessment of where the problem lies, especially his suggestion that the ultimate decision rests entirely with the American military. From my discussions with responsible officials in the Department of Defense, I am convinced that the Pentagon is well aware of the scientific values of Aldabra. It is my strong impression that our Defense authorities have been willing to consider alternative sites. I am aware that our government has fully conveyed to the British the concerns of the American Scientific community. This represents an exemplary attitude which scientists and conservationists cannot but applaud. However, Aldabra is sovereign British territory and the final decision must rest with the United Kingdom.

From this vantage point, therefore, we believe that the fate of Aldabra probably lies in the hands of Denis Healey and the British Ministry of Defence. It is my sincere hope that scientists and public alike, on both sides of the Atlantic, can convince appropriate British authorities of the irreplaceable loss of research opportunities which military construction on Aldabra would surely cause.

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Flyspeck on Glacier Peak

Sperry's comprehensive dissertation on North Cascades National Park (1 Sept., p. 1021) provides evidence that the controversy is actually much ado about nothing.

The 450-acre site of the Kennecott mine is a mere flyspeck in the 458,000-acre Glacier Peak area. The region "which is largely inaccessible except by helicopter or by foot" would be made relatively accessible to the public, with a minimum expenditure of public funds, by the road which Kennecott would have to build. Also, without cost to the public, a reasonably large and potentially beautiful lake would result from the operation. A foregone conclusion cannot be made that the tailings would either pollute streams or destroy fish. It should be obvious that the excavation from which both ore and waste are derived could eventually contain the tailings. Any deleterious effect that the proposed pit might have on the wilderness area would be of short duration, especially if the rather common practice of "restoration" were put into effect, and would be more than offset by the lake created. One has only to visit the numerous abandoned mining areas in the Americas to be impressed by the rapidity with which Nature reclaims her own, even without restoration by human efforts. This, true even in arid areas, is much more rapid in areas of reasonable amounts of rainfall. On completion of mining and restoration, there would exist in this huge wilderness an ideal, ready-made, site on which appropriate authority could erect facilities for public enjoyment, and from which to exercise safety, fire protection, and other functions required in large public recreation areas. Roads, piped water, and sanitary facilities would already exist, together with a lake sufficiently large to provide recreation to many, but not so large that it could not be adequately policed for safety.

Since real "national wealth" consists of the industry of its people and its natural resources, it would be a serious error to deprive a nation of possibly a not inconsiderable portion of its natural wealth. It should not be forgotten that mining claims of the kind in question are, to a large extent, won by aching feet, backs, and heads; not infrequently at the cost of life. The fact that our country is largely self-sufficient in many of its mineral requirements is, to no small extent, a result of the lowly, unsung, prospector. The very existence of 91,000 mining claims, of any nature or worth, is mute testimony to the existence of a large highly mineralized area. The closing off of huge potential areas of mineral wealth augurs ill with respect to our deficiencies in gold, silver, and other minerals. Let us not hastily write off large portions of our national inheritance.

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When Monkeys Are Rats

May I thank Reed publicly for his letter (25 Aug.) expressing his delightfully naive assumption that psychologists have any interest in the identity of their experimental animals. Vague identities will continue to exasperate him until he is assured that what experimental psychologists are interested in is not organisms, but *data*. The data might be presumed to represent "learning" (although it is more probably "food-seeking"—but that's another long story). In any event, the data generator is at best a nuisance chosen because it is clean, docile, and traditional. Those psychologists who are diffident about rats, prefer the convenience of a larger operating field, and have someone else to clean up, may choose monkeys. However, as far as species-specific characteristics (let alone binomial nomenclature), are concerned, a rat is a monkey is a rat.

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Negro Students at Michigan

There appears to be a mathematical error in Kazmann's letter "Negroes at Michigan" (4 Aug.). Accepting for the sake of argument his figures that "the 75 percentile of the normal (or white) group is overlapped only by the 95 percentile of the Negro group" and that "the student body of the University of Michigan came from students with intelligence scores in the upper 25 percent," it follows that from equal numbers of white and Negro students 5 times as many whites as Negroes would qualify. Thus in Michigan, with a 9 : 1 ratio of whites to Negroes in the population, we should expect 9 × 5 or 45

times as many qualified whites as Negroes. Hence, of the University of Michigan's 30,000 students, 1/46th, or about 650, might be expected to be Negro, as opposed to Kazmann's figure of 150. Kazmann quotes an estimate that at present about 450 students are Negro. It therefore seems that the question of discrimination remains open.

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. . . I have no knowledge of the University of Michigan's entrance requirements with respect to scores on standardized intelligence tests. The assumption of selecting those whose scores fell among the upper 25 percent of those taking the test was made only for the sake of argument. I could just as well have used the upper 20 percent or 15 percent. In order to apply Chernoff's probability test, and to draw factual conclusions, factual information must be substituted for assumptions. In substance, even the corrected results of the elementary calculation are close enough to the figures actually reported, so that if there is any discrimination against Negro students the calculated figures do not bear it out.

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Dangers to Marine Mammals Confirmed

The cautions emphasized by Schevill and others (11 Aug., p. 630) concerning use of immobilizing drugs in studies of marine mammals are well taken. We have used the immobilizing drug Sernylan (phencyclidine hydrochloride) in studies of pinnipeds both in the laboratory and in the field (*1*). The drug was extremely useful in the laboratory as an easily administered preanesthetic agent enabling us to manage the animal during later induction of controlled surgical anesthesia for thoracotomy and laparotomy; it also permitted us to carry out minor procedures or measurements without using general anesthesia. We had no complications so long as the drug was given in measured doses (0.2 mg per kilogram of body weight) by syringe. However, on a field trip to Guadalupe Island, Mexico, to study diving physiology in the Northern elephant seal, *Mirounga an-*