

# Letters

## News and Comment in Retrospect

An important point that should be added to John Walsh's excellent centennial article "Science in transition, 1946 to 1962" (4 July, p. 52) is that the key figure in the genesis and development of *Science's* News and Comment section was Joseph Turner, then associate editor of the journal.

Turner not only hired the first staff writer, Margolis, and the second, myself, but formulated the concept of News and Comment as a place for journalism and analysis. The concept is a familiar one in professional journals today, but it surely wasn't then.

To the implementation of this design, Turner also brought the best editorial instincts that I've encountered in 25 years of newspaper, magazine, and book writing. He could quickly and clearly point out what was right and wrong with an article, and any piece he touched was invariably the better for it.

I don't have the slightest doubt that, without Turner, News and Comment would have either not developed at all or followed the well-worn ruts of news-weekly reportage and never achieved the distinction with which it is so widely credited.

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## Conflict Management

Perhaps modesty prevented Kenneth E. Boulding from discussing his own role in creating reason to hope that *Science* will have a 200th anniversary issue. His editorial on the 100th anniversary (4 July, p. 19) points to the creation of a commission on proposals for a National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution by Congress and of the commission's active "seminars" around the nation.

Of course, this didn't just happen. If the impulse was there in Congress, it still

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needed to work with substance, and it needed to know that the public cares. Boulding and a good many other social scientists have provided theory and procedure which convince congressional committees that new forms of conflict management are possible.

Even this is not enough. Boulding and other scientists have also joined with nonscientists in a campaign to demonstrate constituent concern; his letter in the *Washington Post* of 13 June 1977 suggesting that such an institution "would move the whole future in the direction of greater capacity to cope with organized conflict . . ." is a persuasive example. Every scientist should both examine this vital issue and join in supporting the effort that Boulding has helped move ahead.

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## Nuclear Power Prediction

A recent article by Eliot Marshall, "Planning for an oil cutoff" (News and Comment, 11 July, p. 246), refers to a statement by J. J. Taylor of Westinghouse to the effect that nuclear plants could be constructed in half the time it takes today. Taylor argues that with government support "nuclear power could provide the equivalent of an extra 700,000 barrels of oil a day within 6 months, 1.6 million barrels in 2½ years, and 3.8 million barrels in 5 years."

Marshall pointedly comments, "The catch in this scenario . . . is that it assumes an extraordinary degree of governmental and financial support. That support is not available today."

Beyond the "catch" disclosed by Marshall, there are two additional catches inherent in Taylor's statement. First, referring to the 91 nuclear plants under construction, a simple analysis of Taylor's numbers shows that he is assuming these plants would generate electricity at a capacity factor close to 100 percent. During 1979, the average capacity factor for commercially licensed nuclear plants

was only 57 percent. Using this value decreases his upper estimate of 3.8 million barrels of oil by 40 percent.

Second, even if the 91 nuclear plants now under construction could be completed in half the time it takes today, all of these plants would not displace oil. Fossil fuel consumption statistics (1) of the utilities constructing these plants indicate that 61 plants would displace coal; 24 plants would displace either oil, coal, or gas; and only six plants would displace oil. These six plants would displace approximately 160,000 barrels of oil a day compared to Taylor's 3.8 million barrels.

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## References

1. U.S. Central Station Nuclear Electric Generating Units: Significant Milestones [DOE/NE-0030/1(80), Department of Energy, Washington, D.C., 1980]; *Electric Power Statistics, December 1978* [EIA-0034/12(78), Department of Energy, Washington, D.C., 1979].

## Galileo's Observations

In reply to the letter from Ewan A. Whitaker (2 May, p. 446), some of Galileo's observations were excellent; others, including some of his observations of the moon, were much less so. Not all of the latter can be improved by consulting the original drawings (which I mention), for some are described in the *text* of the *Sidereus Nuncius* and are criticized by Kepler, on the basis of his own observations. (There is no need, incidentally, to argue that the *Sidereus Nuncius* was written in Latin; everybody knows that, and I never said otherwise.) I admit that recent research, Whitaker's included, has changed our views concerning part of Galileo's observational (experimental) work; but the change is not always for the better, and there remains ample material to support my general description of his procedure.

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*Erratum:* In the article "Resources, population, environment: An oversupply of false bad news" by Julian L. Simon (27 June, p. 1431), an error was introduced in production. On page 1435, column 1, paragraph 4, under the heading *Fact*, the second sentence should have read, "And the increase [in land used for urban areas plus roadways] over the half century starting in 1920 was only 0.00025 of total land annually," not "0.00025 percent" as printed.

*Erratum:* In the report "Associative behavioral modification in *Hermisenda*: Cellular correlates" by T. J. Crow and D. L. Alkon (18 July, p. 412), the last sentence on page 412, column 2, paragraph 1, should read, "We have now found that modification of the photopositive response in *Hermisenda* is correlated with cellular changes in the type B photoreceptors."