

to the editor

Energy and elasticity

Unfortunately, an error crept into your report dealing with my participation at the forum of power plant siting of the National Academy of Engineering (SN: 3/27/71, p. 218). I refer to the fourth paragraph where your reporter says that I said that "... electric power demand may be inelastic but that total energy demand may be elastic." This should be reversed to read "... electric power demand may be elastic but that total energy demand may be inelastic."

The point is, that at least for some uses, alternatives exist for electric energy, e.g., gas, oil, etc. On the other hand, fewer alternatives exist for energy.

*Carlos Stern, Assistant Professor
Environmental Economics
College of Agriculture
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Conn.*

Physics and ethics

The replies by some of your readers to the charges of the young physicists who are attacking the American Physical Society are typical and even characteristic of any replies so far. James F. Jackson and Thomas A. Schenach (SN: 4/17/71, p. 260) replied to the issues by trying to discredit the individuals who are presenting them.

To Mr. Schenach, I would like to say that it takes no more than an open mind and functioning sense organs to decide that all the consequences of the work of physicists have not benefited mankind. The ultimate benefit to society of a scientific development is indeed a momentous issue, as you put it. Since none of our scientists, including yourself, have decided to face the issue, it is more blatantly obvious, in view of your letter, that you have no answer. Instead, you resort to polemics and innuendo about the young physicists who are trying to remind scientists about their long-forgotten consciences.

To Mr. Jackson, I must respond in much the same way. Saying nothing about an issue is supposed to make a person seem wise. However, saying something and saying it awkwardly immediately makes a person subject to the stylistic criticisms of those who would rather not discuss the subject.

College graduates today know far more than college graduates of 20 years ago. So much more knowledge has been made available and has been included in college curricula. Pressing environmental and social problems are also much more evident. If one is to go to college to gain "understanding,"

as you say, one is irresponsible if the understanding, by design, is to extend only over the "physics" of a scientific development. It must be a remarkable educational system that allows the studying of physics and the studying of ethics, but allows no interrelationship between them.

*Charles H. Ludmer
Urbana, Ill.*

Pot: Cause or symptom?

Your article, "The continuing battle over pot" (SN: 4/24/71, p. 277) left me with the feeling that the researchers, Drs. Kolansky and Moore, may have drawn conclusions on insufficient evidence.

The description of their studies seemed to indicate a correlation between pot smoking and certain psychotic symptoms or symptoms of social maladjustment. This does not imply a cause and effect relationship, with the marijuana causing the maladies. The turning to pot may be just another symptom of maladjustment,

or at most a feedback to it, but one could certainly not generalize pot as a causal factor.

*Sharon Hastenrath
Madison, Wis.*

With bromine

With regard to your article on one-dimensional conductors (SN: 3/20/71, p. 194) and your editorial comment to Prof. Matthias' letter (SN: 4/17/71, p. 260), let me correct some misinformation. The conductivity of potassium tetracyano platinate is 5×10^{-7} mho per centimeter which you stated correctly. However, the conductivity of potassium tetracyano platinate with bromine added is at least 4 mho per centimeter as reported by us (PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS 26 371 (1971)). It is this material which you meant to compare with the conductivity of copper.

*Jerome H. Perlstein
Assistant Professor of Chemistry
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Md.*

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