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to the editor

To Roberts' defense

After reading Fortunato Comunale's letter (SN: 1/31, p. 118), I assume that he as a scientist or engineer has data to support his statement: "Science and society as a whole will benefit more from the space activities of NASA (and the aeronautics as well) in the next five years than 'earth application projects' could have hoped to accomplish in 500 years without utilizing the advancements generated by the intensive benefits of the research and development of the entire space program." If not, his statement is suspect. If he does, I would like to see the data.

*A. J. Sharp, Professor
Department of Botany
University of Tennessee
Knoxville*

I think one of our foremost and forward-looking scientists, a man of recognized authority and vision, Dr. Walter Orr Roberts, is attacked here with unjustified vehemence and sarcasm.

Dr. Roberts is far from alone in his opinion among scientists, including many who have been prominent in NASA's space program. There are many arguments, which now appear valid both for and against Dr. Roberts' position; an intolerably critical attitude toward either side is unwarranted.

Comunale appears to equate opposition to manned Mars exploration with opposition to the whole extraterrestrial space program; manifestly this is an extreme extension of Dr. Roberts' views. The fact that Roberts favors earth applications actually supports Comunale's emphasis on what has been called the beneficial "spin-off" of the space program, though I grant the increased stimulus of deep-space exploration technical developments. Roberts' remarks were directed toward the future programming.

Given the motivation it deserves, the industrially useful technological advances that have come from the space program could have been developed, with Government support, without the space program. I grant that in actuality they would not have been.

The extreme conclusion that "I expect Roberts felt the same way about aviation or the automobile" bespeaks a letter written in too much emotional heat, which ought to have been left in the drawer overnight for re-reading before mailing. (Dr. Roberts was born in 1915!) Yet even here, I would remind Comunale that environmental scientists, psychologists and social scientists are

not in unanimous agreement that these, and other technological and industrial advances, have actually contributed favorably to the quality of life on this planet.

*Dr. Philip S. Riggs
Professor of Astronomy
Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa*

In reply to Fortunato Comunale's letter, I would like to ask: What are the intense benefits of the research and development of the entire space program? His reply is as conservative and conventional as he accuses Dr. Roberts of being. How is the space program expense to be explained to the people of the world? I don't think Comunale's mind accommodates the immensity of the world's poor people, starving people, sick people, helpless people. Does he have any ideas on helping them?

It seems to me that this typically simple answer to the objections of Dr. Roberts and many like him is totally meaningless. Comunale is spouting cliches in the exact same fashion as he accuses Dr. Roberts. It's very sad.

*Emily Cohen
Brooklyn, N. Y.*

A rebuttal

For some time, I have been casting about for a good excuse to cancel my subscription to SCIENCE NEWS; your article concerning the American Medical Association (SN: 1/10, p. 47) has furnished the excuse par excellence.

Speaking from a background of 15 years as a member of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association, representing the section on Internal Medicine, and for 12 years as a member of the AMA Council on Medical Education, I can say without any fear of contradiction that many of the statements made in the article "Grappling with a new image" are half-truths or distortions of the facts. To be sure, the American Medical Association has made some mistakes. What organization of its size has not, including the Federal Government? Yet, the House of Delegates is a completely democratic organization and has consistently stood for constitutional Americanism, which is something your article seems to look down upon. In fact, the article in question is obviously written by one of the neoliberals of the Fabian Socialist type, the kind that has dragged England to her knees and is fast doing the same thing to our country.

The socialistic politician feels that a

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