

# to the editor

## TV and politics

There is a journalistic tendency, I'm afraid, to treat every battle as a war—and every slightest sign of change as a revolution. Doubtless the behavioral scientist as a consultant, the computer as a tool and television as a medium for political persuasion have together produced changes in the way the political wars are fought but I like to think that the first two of these, in particular, have contributed to making the process more rational. What behavioral science tends to do, I suspect, is not to rob the political practitioner of his options or blunt his power but to make him examine his assumptions. That's about all the social scientist can do, after all—to confront the popular wisdom of the politician with evidence that it ain't necessarily so.

The behavioral scientist who fears that television will take the play away from the political organization (see "Campaigns and the new technology," SN: 9/12, p. 229) should look more closely at what our data tell us. They don't tell us that the mass media are effective tools of mass persuasion under most conditions. Yes, it is true that people in general and the less sophisticated

information users in particular assign more credibility to television than to newspapers and other print media. That doesn't mean that they accept influence from television more than they accept influence from peers. In fact the more structured his opinions the less the media can influence them, and political attitudes tend to be highly structured. While Steve Chaffee, Dorothy Douglas and I have found that a public information campaign can produce large-scale changes in information level and attitude, this appears to be possible only when initial knowledge is low and attitudes are relatively unformed. The content of a political campaign tends to concern attitudes and values already strongly held.

Research on the TV debates showed that measurable changes in candidate image can be brought about by a single television exposure. But it was also true that subsequent debates and intervening events quickly moved that trend back toward the "before" profiles. The trouble is that in our desire to demonstrate such effects we all too rarely look at the sustained consequences. TV can probably influence the starting image profiles of a new political personality, but unless he defines the issues in entirely new ways it is doubtful that the one-to-many media can produce political conversions or even have much sustained effect of any kind. Or so, it seems to me, our data tell us.

Perhaps the new rationality in politics will convince the politicians that television is not magic. So there goes your revolution.

*Bruce H. Westley  
Professor and Chairman  
Department of Journalism  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, Ky.*

## Enthusiasm shared

Your new-brief article on our artificial upwelling experiments (SN: 8/15, p. 137) was accurate and informative. Although brief, it included in a few paragraphs the essence of our upwelling experiment in the Virgin Islands area and gave proper credits to the individuals concerned and the funding organization. I consider it an example of the kind of good science reporting that we have come to expect in SCIENCE NEWS.

Many of my scientific colleagues share my enthusiasm for the fine scientific reporting in SCIENCE NEWS. Keep up the good work.

*Dr. Robert Gerard  
Lamont-Doherty Geological  
Observatory  
Palisades, N.Y.*

# films OF THE WEEK

**THE CITIES: A CITY IS TO LIVE IN.** 16mm, color or b&w, sound, 54 min. Call it what you will, pollution or smog, by any other name is dirty air, and it is a plague in our major cities. This and other problems are investigated by CBS News correspondent Walter Cronkite. He reports the many contributive factors to pollution, such as trucks and buses. The problems of transportation is seen choking the city along with pollution. Film also treats the projected plans that are under consideration to help erase these conditions. Audience: high school, college, adult. Purchase color \$575 or b&w \$275; rental \$40 from BFA Educational Films, Dept. SN, 2111 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, Calif. 90404. (CBS-TV Production).


**INCREDIBLE VOYAGE.** 16mm, color, sound, 26 min. Helps to promote a better understanding of the functions and structure of the human body by providing a "conducted tour" within the living human body, revealing view of the human organism which until now has been seen only by doctors and members of the medical profession. Special photographic techniques, including the use of an endoscope, are used to explore such areas as the skeletal system, the brain, blood circulation, the heart and the digestive system. As each part is shown, it is described and explained by accompanying narration. Audience: general. Purchase \$300 or rental \$16 from McGraw-Hill Films, Dept. SN, 330 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

**ORGANIZATION RENEWAL.** Series of five films, 16mm, color, sound, approximately 25 min. each. Organization renewal is the process of initiating, creating and confronting needed changes so as to make it possible for organizations to become or remain viable, to adapt to new conditions, to solve problems, to learn from experiences and to move toward a greater organizational maturity. Series provides basis for workshop sessions. Titles are: Growth States of Organizations; Confrontation, Search and Coping; Individuality and Coping; Coping with Change, and How Organization Renewal Works. Audience: management personnel. Purchase total series \$1,725 or single films \$395. Rental \$50 per film. From Bureau of National Affairs, Dept. SN, 5615 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20852.

**GROUND EFFECTS VEHICLES.** 16mm, color, English sound, 21 min. The air-cushion technique used in French ground effect vehicles has been under development since 1957. Two systems have been used: the peripheral jet and the plenum changer. To make air-cushion vehicles an economic proposition, they had to be made capable of clearing obstacles. Which ever system was adopted, too much power was required to lift the vehicle to a sufficient height. This was solved by fitting a flexible skirt to the rigid structure. Film shows various air-cushion vehicles that have been developed. Audience: engineers, general. Loan for \$5.00 service charge from Society for French American Cultural Services and Educational Aid, Dept. SN, 972 5th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.


**GERMFREE ANIMALS IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH.** 16mm, color, sound, 20 min. Demonstrates the caesarean section technique for acquiring germfree rodents, hand-feeding, germfree thymectomy, inoculations for tumor inductions, for immunization, and other experimental manipulations under germfree conditions. Audience: graduate level biomedical. Free loan from Lobund Laboratory, Dept. SN, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

*Listing is for readers' information of new 16mm and 8mm films on science, engineering, medicine and agriculture for professional, student and general audiences. For further information on purchase, rental or free loan, write to distributor.*




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