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films OF THE WEEK

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to the editor

Revolutionary change

Your article, "Environment report: The reality and the illusion" (SN: 8/15, p. 133) prompts this letter. There are vague hints in it at the need for tax reform, better control of land use, etc. But there is no sign of facing up to the basic question of who owns the natural environment and who ought rightfully to own it. The fact that the unearned profits from the private ownership of the earth have not been collected by governments for the benefit of all people has a serious bearing on the problems of misuse and pollution that now threaten mankind. Collecting 100 percent of the rental value of all land (which by definition includes all natural resources) would produce the funds to implement government environmental-control programs.

Under such a system, those who benefit most from the improvement in the environment would pay the most. For instance, if the efforts to stem the tide of pollution pouring into Lake Ontario succeed and the waters of the New York State shoreline become swimmable again and the smell tolerable, lake-shore land prices will go up. This increase in value ought to be used to help pay for the cleanup project that created the increase, and would be if the rent were collected as a tax. Under the present system the overtaxed wage-earner and homeowner will pay.

More than half a century ago Henry George proposed this kind of a tax as a substitute for all other taxes. It was called The Single Tax. The plan is more than a tax reform; it is a revolutionary change in basic economic concepts. . . .

As your article says in the opening sentence, "Natural systems and man's institutions are inseparable." Hence the above discussion of the economy is pertinent to the environmental crisis.

Lawrence D. Clark, Sr.
East Rochester, N.Y.

Well done

Your article about our fusion shocks, "Mach 3200 and fusion" (SN: 9/12, p. 217) was extremely well done and technically accurate. On behalf of the Columbia Plasma Laboratory please accept our thanks and appreciation.

Robert A. Gross, Professor
Engineering Science
Columbia University
New York, N.Y.

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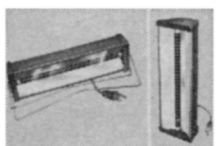
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