

to the editor

In defense of defense

George F. Kite's letter (SN: 1/16/71, p. 40) questions the need for a task force of deep submergence rescue vehicles to support U. S. Navy submarines.

DSRV's directly may affect only the lives of a minority—U. S. Navy submariners. By upholding the morale of these men, however, the DSRV ultimately affects us all by strengthening the submarine service and its active contribution to national defense—a defense necessary to maintain a balance of world power.

Public money must be expended to safeguard this precarious balance, or there will be no "vast majority of the world's people" about which to worry.

Mrs. Michael L. Fannell
Submariner's Wife
Napa, Calif.

I agree completely with Mr. Kite's letter (SN:1/16/71, p. 40) commenting on the adverse influence of narrow interests with respect to the establishment of priorities for the allocation of public monies, especially with regard to the need for a task force of submarine rescue vehicles (SN:9/12/70, p. 231).

A broader perspective is indeed needed! Right now, the Federal Government could free untold dollars for other uses by eliminating the use, maintenance, and procurement of parachutes. I'm sure the affected aviators would all agree with this perspective. After all, they are all volunteers and are adequately compensated for the risks they assume.

C. E. Gingrich
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In response to Mr. Kite's letter, I quote from Martin Caidin's *War for the Moon* (1959, p. 252): "It is important that every American understand that we are throwing our national weight into our space program because, if I may hazard in so brief a statement, the impetus that stands behind our future ventures away from the earth, we do not live for today, but for tomorrow. We do not live for ourselves, but for our children. We cannot grow, as a nation or even as a race, if we cannot look to the sky . . . and beyond. We will reach out for the moon, and then to the planets, and ultimately beyond even our solar system. . . ."

Spectacular projects such as space exploration have already repaid the investment we have made perhaps a hundred-fold (since 1958). Entire new

technologies have been born. One's current TV and Hi-Fi are results of "space exploration;" medical research, biophysics, cryogenics, computer sciences, etc. the list is endless. The point is, space exploration encompasses the broadest possible perspective for the solution of the world's problems and is people oriented. Its by-products and co-products are the real benefits to mankind. The needs of the millions will best be served by increasing the budget for space exploration, thereby securing countless millions employment, regained security, better color TV's, better environment, better health care, etc. and a higher standard of living for the entire world.

Fortunato Comunale
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In his letter condemning defense spending, Mr. Kite made the following observation: "Many who set priorities frequently seem to see only their own narrow interest, while making no attempt to become familiar with the needs of the millions."

I quite agree. Are we to assume that Mr. Kite is an exception, or does this reasoning apply to everyone?

George Adams
New Lexington, Ohio

Alienated experts

I have no Ph.D., nor do I hold a high government position, but it requires only common sense to recognize the folly of removing phreatophytes . . . making "large quantities of water available for other uses," as suggested by Richard C. Culler, U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist, and, I'm certain, advocated by others who have become so specialized as to lose sight of the Blue Oasis that is our earth.

Culler's claim of "saving about 3,400 acre-feet of water annually" (SN: 12/5/70, p. 436) leads immediately to the question of "for whom?" Most of the West is already so dry that a man without water will literally dehydrate in a short time on a summer day. With humidity often 10 percent, five percent or even lower, would Culler turn us into toads, to dry up and blow away with the tumbleweeds? We need water in the air.

Any person who takes the time to look can watch clouds build up on a summer afternoon, turn dark and release their rain. But the rain never reaches the ground, because of the low humidity. You can see it simply "stop" while yet 1,000 feet or more off the ground. With any lower humidity, there wouldn't even be any clouds.

Why not carry this to its logical conclusion, putting all water into concrete pipes and enclosed reservoirs, thus "saving" every last drop? How about draining the ocean into a series of tanks? It is just such messing around that has so often gotten our ecosystem into trouble that will take nature decades or centuries to repair, assuming that man will allow this to happen.

I have always been oriented toward science and technology, but increasingly I find myself wondering how the experts become so alienated from the common man. How long will it be before each person is encased in an air-conditioned container that rides over a solid-asphalt earth?

Raymond A. Dangel
Englewood, Colo.

(Many ecologists would agree with Mr. Dangel's reservations about removing phreatophytes from waterways. An article examining this question will appear in a future issue of *Science News*. Ed.)

Ocean politics

I was especially pleased with the mention in Louise Purrett's excellent article "The politics of marine research" (SN: 1/2/71, p. 9), that the National Academy of Sciences proposal for United States unilateral action is still "being studied" six months after its receipt by the executive branch. This glacial-like movement is not the responsibility of the State Department but apparently arises from obstacles posed by other agencies. It turns out that there are a number of domestic legal barriers to opening foreign research in our own waters, although it may still be possible to deal with them without resorting to legislation by Congress, i.e., unilateral executive action would be enough.

Dr. William T. Burke
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As I read the article "The politics of marine research" I felt it very ironic that countries would refuse research in their waters since in the long run, at some time it would help them. I also wonder why, when countries do refuse research in their waters such as had happened in Turkey, the United States Government doesn't put political pressure on them, such as saying that we will cut back on economic aid if they refuse to let research get on.

Barry Robertson
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