

to the editor

Hospital costs

I have read Dr. Theodore E. Thom's letter on "Costs of health care" and your editorial reply (SN: 4/3/71, p. 228). While it is probably true that hospital costs have risen 170 percent, I doubt your allegation (and the President's) that physicians' fees have increased by 60 percent. Nevertheless, most physicians, including myself, can show you figures which indicate that the cost of operating a doctor's office has increased as much as 40 percent in the past four years. As an example of increased costs, my malpractice insurance premium went up from \$259 in 1970 to \$1,350 this year, even though I have never had a malpractice claim against me.

Most people overlook the real reason for the increase in hospital costs. Around about 1963, nurses, laboratory and X-ray technicians, nurses-aides and the numerous secretaries and allied personnel required to operate a hospital all started asking for a livable wage instead of the subsistence level of pay they had been accustomed to up till then. Since hospitals were traditionally nonprofit organizations, administrators were able to hold off on pay demands, until the Federal Government entered the picture with Medicare. Many administrators then felt that here was the opportunity to give their employees a reasonable wage, at the expense of the Government. The resultant clamor for wage increases brought much needed reforms and put the hospital employees' salary scale more in line with those of industry and business. It is not a case of medical care being overpriced now, but rather one of its being underpriced for many years, at the expense of the hapless nurses and hospital employees who had been deluded by their administrators into believing that their low pay heretofore was a sacrifice to a nebulous concept lumped under a vague term called "dedication."

Ian D. Murphy, M.D.
Toledo, Ohio

Age vs. wisdom

Re the last sentence of Mr. LaSor's letter (SN: 4/3/71, p. 228) vis-a-vis "The greening of the American Physical Society:"

Perhaps such wisdom comes only with age—with its tenured positions, high salaries and social perquisites.

Since the present older generation has the tenured positions, high salaries and social perquisites—but is almost totally lacking in wisdom—on what evidence does Mr. LaSor make his statement?

It is seldom that I actually laugh out loud when reading a letter to the editor, but the David Solan letter did it (I also read it to my wife who did the same). No wonder the young hold the establishment in such low esteem.

William English
Wayland, Mass.

New World man

Regarding your article "The search for New World man" (SN: 2/6/71, p. 98), I wish to make the following comments:

1. Prof. Thomas Lynch is the actual discoverer of the skeletal material from Guitarrero Cave.

2. I do not conclude from the date of the Guitarrero Cave material that the time of man's entry into the New World was 40,000 years ago. Rather this date is an impression that I, as a paleoanthropologist, have formed from the study of myriad kinds of data. It is a suggestion of a minimal antiquity for man in the New World. It is most certainly not an attempt to "pinpoint" a period of time in prehistory, as I assured you in our conversation. I quite agree with Dr. Wormington that there is no reason to suppose that there existed a "Patagonia-or-bust attitude" about the peopling of this part of the world.

3. I did not say that "if the Calico deposit is half million years old the artifacts couldn't be authentic because the *sapiens* line didn't go back that far." This statement makes no sense at all. Dr. Carter is quite correct in observing its nonsense, but I find it embarrassing that this colleague should be led to believe that I could have made a statement of this sort.

Thank you for your attention to these details. In all other respects, I found your article informative and interesting.

Kenneth A. R. Kennedy
Associate Professor of Physical
Anthropology and the Division
of Biological Sciences
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y.

(The sentence, which was not a direct quote, might better have read ". . . because the sapiens line didn't go back that far in America. . . ."—Ed.)

I believe your article on the Calico Mountains excavation presented a picture of the site quite well, although I feel that too much emphasis was given to Dr. George Smith's conception of age. Also, since the ice-free passage

from Asia was available to man as well as to animals during all of the glacial period of the Pleistocene, there is no reason to feel that man's presence on this continent would be unlikely more than 100,000 years ago.

If we can be of any further assistance please call on us.

Ruth D. Simpson
Field Director
San Bernadino County Museum
Bloomington, Calif.

No recent reversal

With reference to your article "When the north pole goes south" (SN: 4/10/71, p. 251), Immanuel Velikovsky in his book "Ages In Chaos" pointed out that in 1896 Giuseppe Folgheraiter found evidence from Greek and Etruscan vases that the earth's magnetic field was reversed as late as the 8th century B.C. (A.I.C., p. 146). This gives a somewhat different figure than the 700,000 years for the last reversal of the earth's field as reported in your article. Has this evidence since been refuted?

Theodore Lasar
New York, N.Y.

(Most geophysicists give little credence to Velikovsky's views. There is no accepted evidence for a reversal in the 8th century B.C.—Ed.)

BIND and SAVE your copies of science news

Keep your copies of SCIENCE NEWS always available for quick, easy reference in this attractive, practical binder. Simply snap the magazine in or out in a few seconds—no punching or mutilating. It opens FLAT—for easy reference and readability. Sturdily constructed, this buff-colored buckram binder stamped in gold leaf will make a fine addition to your library.

SCIENCE NEWS binders hold one six-month volume of SCIENCE NEWS. Each of the 26 issues snaps into the cover with a metal strip. \$5.00 each, 2 for \$9.00. Postage-paid.

Order Now, From

science news

Dept. 222

1719 N St. N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20036