

to the editor

AMA meeting

I have read with interest the article "AMA convention—Decline of an American institution?" (SN: 7/3/71, p. 6).

In general I thought the coverage of the actions of the AMA House of Delegates was excellent, as were the reflections on the political activity which went on.

My major concern lies in the article's seemingly joyful suggestion that the AMA meeting is sick or dead as evidenced by the decline of membership, falling attendance and lack of activist demonstrations. Incidentally, the AMA Scientific Exhibit Section this year was not diminished in size and, in fact, attracted a large audience of interested physicians.

We do not look upon the AMA meeting or any other medical convention as sacrosanct. Many of our members consider other meetings much more important. However, the commercial companies that support meetings have only a few ways to reach their prospective customer, the physician, face to face in a situation where questions may be asked and answers given in proper context. The medical meeting is one of these ways.

Regrettably, the applauded or unapplauded decline of a meeting such as the AMA affects the thinking of many budget-minded managers who are intent on "saving money." They are quick to point to news articles, such as yours, which supports their present theory. The ultimate can only be that medical meetings are given less consideration, and a potent, viable means of communicating significant information to the medical profession is made vulnerable to the economic axe.

We do not think SCIENCE NEWS or any other publication wishes to contribute to the destruction of one of the important avenues of communication to the medical profession because of a

slow AMA meeting in a once-glamorous resort city, which had been selected as the convention site more than four years ago.

*William H. Buch
President, Medical
Exhibitors Association
Chicago, Ill.*

Violent Americans

The article "The Violent Americans" by R. J. Trotter (SN: 7/3/71, p. 14) included two surveys concerning what men think constitutes "violence." It would appear to me to be an exercise in semantics, rather than sociology. The conclusions by Blumenthal do not appear to me to be supported by the mere exercise of having men categorize what they feel falls into the semi-legal term, "violence."

I believe that a survey asking whether persons favor or do not favor certain actions (or believe change is needed in the actions indicated), would come a little closer to "telling the story" than asking persons to think in single-word concepts, or dictionary definitions."

*E. John Schoneberger
Los Angeles, Calif.*

Observations on altruism

I found the article "Is altruism dead?" by R. J. Trotter (SN: 6/5/71, p. 387) interesting. However, I found no reason given for anti-altruistic behavior. My observations:

In a rural area it is quite obvious that the help-one-another attitude prevails. Until now this was thought to be just the quaint ways of rural families. Whereas, in urban and suburban areas a feeling of every one for him- or herself prevails.

In urban and suburban areas the emphasis placed upon spectator activities (professional sports, movies and TV) changes the outlook of the spectator from active to passive. All that

he, or she, sees is entertainment and will soon be over. This fact is the cause, I believe, for the lack of seminary-like attitudes in present-day urbania.

In rural America, while TV does have a large segment of the population watching it, the people are more geared down to what spectator activities are—nothing more than entertainment to be completely forgotten once away from the activity. These people have a lot more on their minds regarding life than who's to win what championship or whatever.

*Howard Krauss
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Society and UFO reports

While it is quite true that my sociological study on UFO reports (SN: 6/26/71, p. 435) has been subject to a great deal of critical review, there is nothing of a serious commentary which has countered my argument. Much of the discussion has centered on purely psychological levels of analysis, whereas my theory deals with the linkage between societal and individual level phenomena. Consequently, the lack of familiarity with a clearly sociological argument has led to a certain degree of confusion and misunderstanding, all of which is healthy and desirable, and it leaves me feeling quite impressed by the extent of interest in what was necessarily a "way out" piece of research.

*Donald I. Warren
Associate Professor
University of Michigan
School of Social Work
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

One-way trip

At a cost of \$3.8 million, surely the Lunar Roving Vehicle (SN: 6/12/71, p. 404) has its own power system for being returned to earth. (Oh well! Such is the nature of our modern scientific technology.)

Praises to you for a generally excellent publication. Making the dichotomy of science intelligible is certainly a stupendous task.

*L. Gordon Lee
State College, Pa.*

Helping those in distress

After reading Mr. L. L. Taylor's letter "Eliminating the White Plague," (SN, 7/17/71, p. 36), I'm flabbergasted. This poor man needs more help than the people he is speaking of, I think. Shall this poor world ever become so overpopulated that we cannot help our people who are in distress?

*Mrs. Edna M. Travis
E. Hanover, N. J.*

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