

films OF THE WEEK

TO THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE. 16mm, color, sound, 23 min. The film reports on three areas of scientific involvement: the building of a precision instrument for measuring distant objects; new techniques of long-base interferometry; and cosmology, specifically concerning quasars. Sequences show the construction of the Algonquin Park Radio Telescope and its first major research project: the diameter dimension of a quasi-stellar radio source. The film emphasizes the fact that our knowledge of the universe is still in its infancy. Audience: high school, college. Purchase \$305 or rental \$15 from McGraw-Hill Films, Dept. SN, 330 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

SOUTH AMERICA: MARKET DAY. 16mm, color, sound, 10 min. All over South America, market day is an exciting, important and colorful event. With a minimum of narration, this film allows students to draw many conclusions about economic and social life in South American villages. They will observe the variety of foods and spices, modes of transportation to and from the market, clothes worn and sold, utensils, relationship of children and parents, entertainment, reading materials, the relative importance of manufactured and handcrafted goods and the means of exchange. Audience: elementary, secondary. Purchase \$145 or rental \$8 from BFA Educational Media, Dept SN, 2211 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, Calif. 90404.

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.

to the editor

England's heroin program

Your article on the treatment of heroin addicts (SN: 6/26/71, p. 433) has been discussed, so far, only in an irrational manner. Mr. Taylor says (SN: 7/17/71, p. 36) that addicts should be given more and more heroin until they die—thus easing the population problem. Mrs. Travis (SN: 7/31/71, p. 72) and Mr. Altrui (SN: 8/14/71, p. 104) reply in outraged tones that we should "help our people in distress." Apparently this phrase refers to the junkies, not to their victims.

Readers who wish to think rationally about this problem might be interested to learn about the English system of coping with heroin. In England, the Government provides free heroin to registered addicts (not to the general public). This system has two beneficial results.

First, addicts do not have to steal to maintain their habit. In this country, addicts have to have an income on the order of \$50 a day, sometimes more, to buy heroin on the black market. Since few of them earn that much, most resort to robbery or burglary,

and many become parttime pushers. Under the English system this is not necessary.

Second, organized crime is deprived of a major source of income. In this country, the income from heroin sales is on the order of \$10 million a day (200,000 addicts at \$50 each). Under the English system such income is negligible. A corollary of this is that organized crime has no incentive to recruit new addicts. The number of addicts in England is no longer increasing.

Of course adoption of the English system would have no effect on the population problem. There are only a few hundred thousand addicts, and they are not going to die very quickly if given free heroin. In fact the present American system is perfectly suited to producing deaths (including persons killed in robberies), if that is really what Mr. Taylor wants. Mentioning overpopulation in such a context serves merely to discredit the population-control movement.

Lyle Burkhead
Berkeley, Calif.

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Who's laughing?

After reading "A sense of humor" (SN: 9/18/71, p. 191) I must surely award to Lawrence La Fave a degree in addition to what he may already have—that of M.C. (Master of Confusion). He is reported as saying that he finds that one is amused only at the "Bad guy," then goes on to state that "There is no such thing as a sense of humor." Then he says that "To deny that a sense of humor exists is not of course to deny that humor exists." I can only hope that La Fave will pardon me for past errors—all those jokes I have been reading and hearing—I guess I only *thought* that I thought they were funny.

Harold Iden
Culver City, Calif.

I admire the excellent accuracy of your summary of my paper on humor given at the American Psychological Association meeting; unlike the newspapers which carried an article on my talk and erroneously substituted the word *laughter* for *amusement* in my definition of sense of humor.

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