

to the editor

Freedom vs. control

May I once again express a small opinion in the B. F. Skinner controversy? It regards the critical comment on Rep. Gallagher's remarks, offered by Kenneth B. Little: "... a misunderstanding of the scope and goals . . . can lead to misguided attacks. Skinner is not proposing behavior control that does not already exist" (SN: 12/25/71, p. 420).

Suppose that for the broad ideas of behavior control, freedom, and dignity we substitute homicide, security, and longevity. Without going into lengthy arguments concerning the pros and cons of the various (existing) forms of homicide (from infanticide to abortion, from Seppuku to sleeping-pills, from hemlock to electrocution, from tribal raids to global war) an amazing parallel can be seen.

While it is true that the form of homicide called murder is still used to a limited extent "... by a small number for their own self interest," society has found it expedient to take steps to limit the uses of homicide in the interest of improving security and longevity. I believe that Rep. Gallagher has similar ideas concerning limitations upon behavior control, in order that society may improve freedom and insure dignity.

With such a purpose I find it difficult to quarrel. The price of maintaining any of the graces—freedom, dignity, security and longevity—is everlasting vigilance with respect to "controls," old or new, existing or to be discovered.

*George V. Morris
Sequim, Wash.*

A proposal

When we learn from Burkhead's letter (SN: 10/16/71, p. 258) that the government in England provides heroin to registered addicts while American addicts are forced to steal \$50 a day and organized crime makes \$10 million a day from our 200,000 addicts, one wonders why Americans don't have their unemployed farmers raise poppies and oats (see Anand, NATURE 5320) and their unemployed chemists preparing clean heroin. Deaths due to overdose, impurities and organized crime would be reduced concomitantly with a reduction in unemployment and foreign aid.

*James A. Duke
Beltsville, Md.*

Detergent manufacturer's view

The article, "Man and the environment: Fighting the backlash," by Richard H. Gilluly (SN: 12/18/71, p. 410) raised several points which I would like to comment on.

In his article, Mr. Gilluly attempts to position the detergent industry as seeking to avoid the removal of phosphates from its detergent products through the manipulation of scientific information concerning the safety hazards of current non-phosphate detergent ingredients and the limited role phosphates play in the eutrophication problems of the country. This,

however, is not the case. Procter & Gamble, for one, has repeatedly reiterated its commitment to remove phosphates from its detergents as quickly as a safe and effective alternative can be found.

Procter & Gamble has not tried to deny that phosphorus may be involved in eutrophication under certain conditions. However, phosphorus is introduced into surface waters in great quantities from a variety of sources other than detergents. Domestic sewage, for example, contains a more than adequate supply of phosphorus to support excessive algal growth. It is for this reason, that we believe the only realistic solution to the problem of accelerated eutrophication where phosphorus is limiting is the adequate removal of all phosphates from waste waters through proper sewage treatment.

*L. G. Ross, Associate Manager
Public Relations Department
Procter & Gamble Co.
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Lost mass

Two articles, "The mystery of the missing neutrinos" and "Does the mass of an object increase with time?" (SN: 9/25/71, pp. 203 and 210), gave rise to an interesting thought. Suppose that instead of a neutrino being required to balance the equations of nuclear beta decay, the lost mass is explained by the theory of Hoyle and Narlikar.

This could mean: 1) that experiments which supposedly detect neutrinos are detecting some other events; 2) that nuclear beta decay could allow observation close at hand of the change of mass with time. This is not normally observable as all local mass, and its effects, is increasing uniformly; 3) that the discrepant redshifts of connected bodies result from getting out of time because one of the bodies was super-rich in material, which has suffered nuclear beta decay.

As a physicist now in management, I would be completely out of touch if it were not for SCIENCE NEWS, which I have been reading since 1950. Thank you.

*Lester C. Morton
Dunmurry, Northern Ireland*

On the SLAC bombing

Dietrick E. Thomsen wrote a strange "Commentary" in your Christmas issue (SN: 12/25/71, p. 418). Apologizing for his return to old-fashioned journalism, Mr. Thomsen called the bombing of the Stanford accelerator the work of a fiend, and the thinking it represents, a Dionysian resurgence.

At the risk of jumping head first into the hot broth, I should like to defend the bombing, granted two non-Dionysian premises which Mr. Thomsen might not find too hard to accept. The first is that present scientific developments, including the accelerator, are serving the interests of American policy. The second premise assumes that there exist social and behavioral sciences represented by Vilfredo Pareto, B. F. Skinner, McGeorge Bundy,

Walt Rostow and Henry Kissinger.

Obviously, then, American policy is and has been directed by scientists, according to scientific ideas, and toward values which the relevant scientists find acceptable. There were no people, certainly no women and children in the linear accelerator. Only a moderate number of bombs were involved. The violence was of short duration, and therefore did not require a sustained hatred or heartlessness.

We are taught, or at least used to be taught, that we live in a republic run by the people, where we are all responsible for policies pursued.

For a decade, I was involved in writing the biography of the abolitionist editor Elijah P. Lovejoy, murdered in Illinois in 1837. In his time, the word "fiend" was reserved by the journalists who were not old-fashioned then, to describe the actions of those who, like Lovejoy and William Lloyd Garrison, spoke out for the immediate abolition of slavery—those strange people who would suddenly and without preparation "let the slaves loose among us." Defenders of the status quo sincerely felt the incomprehensibility of ideals and actions which today seem reasonable and even heroic to many of us.

*John G. Gill
Professor of Philosophy
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, Mich.*

I have just read Dietrick Thomsen's brilliant commentary and observation on the bombing of the Stanford Linear Accelerator. He possesses a mental depth and concern that I am certain will be missed or discounted by most.

I, too, must comment. As incisive and perceptive as was his observation, he avoided the necessary conclusion: Because of the convictions and determined attitudes possessed and increasingly expressed in overt action, the result shall be eventual disaster for all. The science community shall claim and deserve the far greater portion of blame.

Throughout the immediate past centuries, the lay person has surrendered to science the rights to delineate much of the physical, material and spiritual lot of mankind. This was a trust in the ultimate degree. Science is beginning to fail that trust. The lay community knows and understands this with a clarity that would astound the pinch-brain and tunnel-vision science "elite."

*Ralph J. Walters
San Jose, Calif.*

If the commentary is supposed to be a joke, I don't think it's funny, and if it is supposed to be serious, I think it is preposterous. I am a physicist (Ph.D., Caltech, 1949) with quite a fair grasp of the history of physics and of current events as well, and I find this harangue completely incomprehensible, and no credit to SN.

*Charles F. Robinson
Santa Barbara, Calif.*