U.S. science students guests at Nobel events

Some of the world's scientific elite are in Stockholm this week for the Nobel Prize ceremonies and Nobel lectures, but this year there is something new. Three American high-school science students, winners of a special joint service award of an all expenses-paid visit to Stockholm for the Nobel ceremonies, are attending the events.

They were selected from students exhibiting their work in New Orleans last May at the International Science and Engineering Fair, administered by Science Service.

The three are Harold J. Loveridge of Lafayette, Ind.; Van J. Wedeen of New York City; and Cindy Lindsay of Los Alamos, N.M. They were selected by the U.S. Army, Air Force and Navy.

The students arrived in Stockholm Dec. 6 and spent two days visiting educational and science institutions. Their schedule calls for them to attend a reception held for American Nobel laureates at the American Embassy and a general reception for all Nobel laureates by the Nobel Foundation. On Dec. 10 they were to attend the Nobel Prize ceremony and banquet and the next day hear the Nobel lectures and visit the Royal Academy of Sweden. Dorothy Schriver, assistant director of Science Service, is accompanying them. □

Chief Justice stays air quality act

For some months now, the Federal courts have been attempting to solve a legal hassle over whether the Clean Air Act simply requires that air quality in polluted areas be brought up to certain standards or whether it also forbids deterioration of clean air. On Nov. 1 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia held that the Clean Air Act does forbid "significant deterioration" of clean air. The court gave the Environmental Protection Agency until Dec. 1 to publish regulations forbidding states to permit degradation of clean air. But the agency continued to protest the court order on grounds that such an interpretation of the law would effectively halt economic growth.

Now, at the last minute, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger has granted EPA a reprieve by staying the lower court decisions. In a brief order, Burger said the stay will be effective until the full court has a chance to consider the issues involved and determine whether the Federal Government has the power to require states to maintain air quality levels higher than those set by Federal regulations. □

Population and the American future

The Rockefeller Commission on Population and the American Future prepared a film version of its findings to be aired on prime-time television (SN: 4/8/72, p. 232). Commercial networks, however, refused to sell the time, claiming that all such shows are prepared by network news organizations. At issue was the commission's liberal stand on abortion.

The commission turned to the Public Broadcasting System and finally aired its documentary last week. The adverse public reaction that was feared did not materialize. WNET in New York received letters from Catholic organizations before the show was presented, suggesting that it not be shown. During and after the program, however, only three persons phoned the station to complain. In Washington, D.C., WETA received 50 phone calls. Only two were opposed to the liberal abortion views expressed. In Chicago, Robert Sanders of WTTW was surprised that only 39 calls came in. Four were opposed.

This feedback, however, is not the whole story. Nationwide Nielson ratings are not yet available, but overnight results from New York and Los Angeles indicate that fewer than two percent of those watching television during that time were watching the commission's show. But perhaps it doesn't make any difference. The National Center for Health Statistics reported this week that, for the first time, the nation's birth rate has fallen below the replacement level of 2.1 children per family. For the first nine months of this year the birth rate was 2.08, compared to the 2.39 rate for the same time last year. □

ACS politics

Allan C. Nixon, the grass-roots president-elect of the American Chemical Society (SN: 5/13/72, p. 313), has received strong endorsement for his professional enhancement program. The results of the ACS's national election for the next president-elect came in last week. Bernard S. Friedman, who was supported by Nixon and who supports Nixon's policies on professionalism, was elected by a 17,000 to 10,000 majority. Friedman, a lecturer at the University of Chicago, was nominated by petition and defeated the two candidates nominated by the ACS board of directors. He will take office as president-elect on Jan. 1, 1973 and intends to resign his position at the University of Chicago in July 1973. Like Nixon, Friedman intends to devote full time to his duties at the ACS.

Oceanic drug research 'down under'

Although American pharmaceutical companies aren't particularly enamoured with oceanic drug research at present, rumor had it that Hoffmann-La Roche would be setting up marine research facilities in Australia (SN: 9/23/72, p. 204). The rumor has now been confirmed. Roche is building a $3 million Institute of Marine Pharmacology near Sydney.

The reason Roche has chosen Australia, apparently, is that marine life abounds along the country's 12,000-mile coastline. There are distinct advantages to being able to rush marine specimens to the lab before their natural chemicals dry up or deteriorate. □

Space briefs

Before Sputnik, NASA was the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. And now more and more emphasis is being placed on NASA's aeronautics expertise. Developing a quiet, short-take-off and landing craft (QUESTOL) is one such project (SN: 4/17/71, p. 269). The agency has selected Lockheed-Georgia Co., Marietta, a division of Lockheed Aircraft Corp. for negotiations on a contract for the design (and an option for the fabrication) of a quiet fan-jet propulsive-life research aircraft. If construction is authorized, Lockheed would deliver the research vehicle in two years. The design phase contract is for about $600,000.

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NASA's Ames Research Center is developing instruments for a Global Air Sampling Program (GASP) that will be used to monitor both gaseous and particulate-type pollutants from aircraft at altitudes above 20,000 feet. However, the instruments can also be used for all types of air-pollution monitoring on a global basis. This month Ames is flight-testing instruments to measure ozone, water vapor, oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, ammonia and particulates including carbon, nitrates and sulfates. NASA is using a Convair 990 for the flight tests.

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NASA successfully launched a scientific satellite Nov. 21 for the European Space Research Organization (ESRO). The satellite carried six instruments to investigate and measure polar ionosphere phenomena. The polar ionosphere is a region of high ion density that begins in the upper atmosphere and extends to an indefinite height in space. The event was the twenty-seventh consecutive successful launch for the Scout Rocket. □