

science news[®] to the editor

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COVER: Superconducting magnet cooled to near absolute zero by liquid helium is used at UCLA hospital to treat patient with tumor of the tongue. Surgeons inject a silicone-iron compound into the patient. The powerful magnet holds the compound in place until it hardens in blood vessels near the tumor. This cuts off the tumor's blood supply and destroys it. See p. 408. (Photo: SLAC)

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Sybil

I found Robert Trotter's article on Sybil (SN: 5/26/73, p. 344) extremely interesting but was surprised by his statement that "Sybil was the first multiple personality to undergo analysis." I recall the similar case of a Miss Beauchamp described in a book entitled *The Dissociation of a Personality* which appeared some 40-odd years ago. Unfortunately, the author's name escapes me now. Miss Beauchamp's personality split into five or six parts, all female. The analysis and reintegration of her split personality was effected by hypnosis as in Sybil's case.

Charles W. Clapp, Ph.D.
Sun City Center, Fla.

(The case of Christine Beauchamp was described by Morton Prince in 1905. Hypnotic sessions were conducted with the three personalities involved, but a complete psychoanalysis was not conducted.—Ed.)

Self-righteous critics

I hope the self-righteous critics of "Licensing for parenthood" (letters in SN: 6/2/73, p. 351) read "Sybil" (SN: 5/26/73). When Sybil was very young, her mother tortured her regularly. The mother would "spread her (Sybil's) legs with a wooden spoon, suspend her from a light cord, and insert various objects into her." Requiring a license for raising children would be a method to screen out grossly disturbed people like Sybil's mother, and decrease incidences of such horrible child abuse.

There are many problems and potential abuses in licensing of parenthood. Obviously requirements for a license should be most lenient, and only grossly disturbed people should be refused. Those refused should have every right of appeal. By such measures, parental licensing might prevent the most horrible child abuse without interfering with anyone's rights.

David E. Harrison
The Jackson Laboratory
Bar Harbor, Me.

The problems described in Roger McIntire's article "Licensing proposal for parenthood" (SN: 5/12/73, p. 305) are real. His proposed solution, however, is not realistic, as evidenced by the sampling of responses (SN: 6/2/73, p. 351).

There's just no way that such a proposal will ever be turned into law in the foreseeable future.

A more realistic solution is to work on the problems of parenthood through our existing educational systems. They couldn't be made mandatory, but workshops for teaching parents to live with their children should at least be offered as part of our public adult education programs. Notice that I propose workshops, not classes or a "course." The distinction is that workshops are run by the participants, guided by those they respect as experts in various fields. This eliminates the question of who gets to play God.

As to how you get at the very people that need this kind of education the most, the child beaters, mentally ill, and so on, who might, by nature of their malady, not be kindly disposed towards such a program, I have no answer. I offer this as a more realistic kind of action that can be started NOW in every community that chooses to begin it, but it is not the ultimate solution any more than licensing parents would be.

James Gerrish
Hanover, N.H.

Soviet antitritium work

I was a bit distressed at your light-handed mention of Soviet effort and success in your recent article on the Soviet production of antitritium (SN: 5/26/73, p. 337). Your article claimed that "scientists in the Soviet Union seem to have a penchant for" and "presumably now are going after heavier and rarer species of . . ." in such a way that the impact of the production seemed to be belittled. I think that the production is significant, however, and I am bothered a bit to think that perhaps some Yankee chauvinism has crept in here. Since I believe this slip to be unintentional, insofar as it issues from a very high caliber magazine, I hope that in future discussions of Soviet contributions a more enlightened approach can be taken; perhaps an extensive treatment of Soviet scientific policies with regard to antimatter would be in order.

David Radd
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Lawrence, Kan.

(No slight of the Soviet efforts was intended.—Ed.)

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