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Cover: In the life of the humble fruitfly *Drosophila* there are rhythms that repeat with clockwork regularity. Scientists using techniques based on mathematical reasoning are now learning how to stop *Drosophila's* clock—and other biological clocks as well. See p. 164. (Illustration: John Wine)

Publisher	E. G. Sherburne Jr.
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Advertising	Scherago Associates, Inc. 11 W. 42nd St. New York, N.Y. 10036 Fred W. Dieffenbach Sales Director

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street
Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$10; 2 yrs., \$18; 3 yrs., \$25. (Add \$2 a year for Canada and Mexico, \$3 for all other countries.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be addressed. Include zip code.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Established as Science News Letter ® in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices.

Published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255). Cable SCIENSERV.

March 9, 1974

to the editor

Oil article thought provoking

The controversy currently raging in your letters column over John Douglas' article on the oil crisis is proof of the thought-provoking quality of the piece. For as long as I have been reading your fine publication, I cannot recall more—or more varied—response to any one story.

The issue seems to center around a basic question of journalism: Should the reporter take a stand? We are fooling ourselves if we think that any reporter is ever without a stand (unless he is ignorant of his subject). The crispest bare-facts reporting still consists of facts selected by the reporter. When a journalist openly states his bias, instead of trying to hide it, he gives the reader a better chance of evaluating the reporting.

Douglas has written a fine piece of interpretive, investigative and clearly labeled news commentary. The writing itself was catchy and compelling. Douglas posed some intriguing questions. His understanding of the situation added to my understanding of it.

I would like to see more of this kind of reporting. I'm not suggesting that you change the format of SCIENCE NEWS, but please let the mystery buffs in on the next sequel of this spellbinding whodunit.

Dava Sobel
Science Writer
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y.

Saturday morning sexism

I just finished reading the article "Saturday morning sexism" (SN: 1/26/74, p. 58). I am very tired of seeing the human race analyzed and "protected" to death by sociologists and psychologists. I do not think that children are as affected by male/female roles as portrayed in cartoons(?) as Richard M. Levinson indicates. Children up to age 10 are very self-motivated and do not think in terms of male/female as much as Levinson does. Also, children above that age will change their attitudes as they see more of the real world through more mature eyes.

Vicki Shidel
McKeesport, Pa.

Steps toward artificial vision

Your account of our efforts to develop artificial vision for the blind (which I presume was written by Joan Arehart-Treichel, who spoke to me on the phone) is accurate and "unsensational" (SN: 2/2/74, p. 68). This was extremely important because I have subsequently learned that Ms. Treichel's story was used as a basic file for a number of other stories which appeared throughout the country.

We obviously have a long way to go on the project. I can only hope your future accounts of our work are as accurate as those which have appeared to date.

Wm. H. Dobbelle
Director: Neuroprostheses Program
Associate Director: Institute for
Biomedical Engineering
University of Utah

Lake Vanda's warm waters

In your article "The first probes beneath Antarctica," drilling into Lake Vanda is described, a lake 200 feet deep where water is found at 80 degrees F. You state that in spite of a 10-foot-thick layer of ice the scientists involved in the study have come to the conclusion that the water is heated by solar energy "transmitted down through the ice" (SN: 1/26/74, p. 62).

The reason for this curious and strange conclusion is the fact that the sediments into which drilling took place were cold. I believe that the conclusion is debatable because, as in many geothermal fields, the heat may enter the field only through faults where water may circulate deep and pick up heat. It is quite feasible that this is the case also in Lake Vanda and sediments some distance away from the fault may very well be cold. Furthermore, if solar energy should really be capable of penetrating 10 feet of ice and heat up water 200 feet deep in Antarctica environment, the question must be asked why isn't warm water found everywhere under ice in similar areas of solar exposure. Finally, if solar energy should be the source of heating up, there should be seasonal variations in the temperature of the bottom water during the long months when solar energy is not available in the Antarctica.

Dr. Joseph Barnea
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for Training and Research
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