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COVER: Mapping of radio galaxies indicates that they can be sorted into four classes. This one, 3C 264, a haloed source, belongs to Class II. The classes can be made to form an evolutionary sequence. See p. 204. (Illustration: Stull et al. in the *Astronomical Journal* 80:568)

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SEPTEMBER 27, 1975

LETTERS

Statement on astrology

Hooray! It's about time the scientific community has made a concerted effort to label these pseudoscientific claims for what they really are—bunk! ("Science vs astrology: New battle, old war": SN: 9/13/75, p. 166). Now maybe people will wake up and master their own destiny instead of depending upon astrology to do it for them. There is no doubt that firm believers will denounce this claim, since no one likes their beliefs shot down before them, but it is high time they face up to reality like the rest of us.

Now, if only more efforts were made in a similar vein about other occult and pseudoscientific realms that would finally set things straight about secret lives of plants and the Uri Gellers, the public would be much better off both intellectually and financially.

Steven Okulewicz
Dept. of Physics, Geology
& Astronomy
Staten Island Community College
Staten Island, N.Y.

While I may agree with their viewpoint, I find it inconceivable that 186 prominent scientists lent their names to such a warning. As charming as astrology is, it certainly doesn't warrant such concern.

M. C. Schoonmaker III
Forest Hills, N.Y.

Climate change in New Zealand

With reference to "Warming in the Southern Hemisphere" (SN: 8/16/75, p. 105), we must point out that even New Zealand is experiencing climatic change. Extreme weather events have been occurring even though temperatures are still climbing.

The country recorded its highest temperature (42° C) in February 1973 since records were begun, and during the winters of 1974 and 1975 east coast areas of the country which are normally dry have had high rainfall and consequent flooding. In March 1975 a tropical cyclone ravished the country and at the end of July, New Zealand had its strongest gale since European settlement. The gale blew down many established forests. During July, southern New Zealand had its highest winter temperatures (22° C) ever recorded, while central New Zealand was experiencing the heaviest snowfalls for many years.

With the climatic warming there has been

a poleward shift in pressure belts in contrast to the squeezing of climatic zones towards the equator observed in the Northern Hemisphere. In other words, the idea that migration of southern climatic zones are mirror images of northern counterparts does not appear to happen in the southwest Pacific.

M.J. Salinger
Scientist, Physiology Department
University of Otago Medical School
Dunedin, New Zealand

Nova Cygni 1975

Nearly every major newspaper in the land properly credited a 17-year-old Japanese amateur astronomer with the discovery of Nova Cygni 1975 (SN: 9/13/75, p. 164). But not SCIENCE NEWS! International Astronomical Union Circular 2826 (which you quote) clearly records that Kentaro Osada, Yamaguchi, Japan, officially reported the nova more than two hours ahead of all the others. Let's give the young amateur observers credit where it is due!

J.U. Gunter
Durham, N.C.

(According to Brian Marsden, 17-year-old Kentaro Osada was apparently the first person to see the nova; M. Honda was the first person to report it officially. The question is somewhat moot because there were many hundred independent discoveries and because novas, unlike comets, are not named after their discoverers.—Ed.)

Overkill?

I used to think that lawyers would spell the downfall of civilization. I'm not so sure anymore that it won't be the social scientists and environmentalists. Consider, for example, the overkill in the report on patching plasters (SN: 8/16/75, p. 100). I'm certain that even dirt has its share of carcinogens. Does this mean we outlaw it?

Howard L. McFann
Linwood, N.J.

Fingertip perception

Regarding the sense of touch (SN: 8/2/75, p. 73), there is a simpler explanation for the results of the experiments described: In bare finger contact, the natural skin oils and sweat act as a lubricant, reducing friction and therefore reducing the sensory input. Inserting a paper eliminates the lubricant effect.

M. F. Thorne
Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Cretaceous, not 19th century

In the Sept. 13 issue, the word "million" was accidentally omitted in a sentence describing when a sunken island in the Atlantic had begun its descent (p. 165). The correct figure is 105 million years ago.—Ed.

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