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COVER: Environmental, neurological and behavioral elements played roles in the evolution of language. A psychologist, with inputs from a variety of fields, juggles these elements and comes up with a theory of when, where, how and why language evolved. See story p. 378. (Photo: Dale Appelman)

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DECEMBER 13, 1975

LETTERS

Mercury nomenclature

Readers of Jonathan Eberhart's interesting article on planetary nomenclature (SN: 11/1/75, p. 282) may be interested in some recent decisions regarding the planet Mercury, which the dramatic flyby photography of Mariner 10 has just revealed in the past 18 months. The International Astronomical Union has agreed to name large plains (comparable to the lunar maria) for names of Mercury in a variety of languages (e.g., Tir, Odin, Suisei) and to name the prominent compressional, lobate scarps that are peculiar to this planet for historical ships of discovery and exploration (e.g., Endeavour, Santa Maria, Vostock).

The major class of features requiring names are craters. These will be named for great past contributors to the humanities and arts, such as authors of prose and poetry, composers, painters and sculptors. This scheme is complementary to that used on the Moon, where scientists are commemorated in crater names, and we hope it will produce a nomenclature for Mercury that is not scientifically or culturally parochial and that avoids the overlap and ambiguity that Eberhart describes as afflicting some Martian and lunar names.

David Morrison
Chairman

IAU Task Group on Nomenclature
for the Planet Mercury
University of Arizona
Tucson, Ariz.

Modern-day Lysenkoists

You point out that Edward O. Wilson's sociobiological conclusions ("Taking Stock of Sociobiology" SN: 11/29/75, p. 347) support the idea of "kin selection" and indicate a genetic basis for much of human behavior. You also point out that there is a group of leftist "scientists" already preparing to denounce, not the research, but its implications. You would condemn such absurdity from the right. If a group were to already be formed to denounce Wilson's argument that homosexuality may not be an illness, I have no doubt you would point out immediately that such instant puritanism has no place in science. Why not show the same courage against the left? Why don't you, for once, take the side of science openly against the Lysenkoists of the scientific community, those who have instant condemnations ready on any research which disagrees with their politics? I do not think I am alone in being awfully tired of these political users of sci-

entific titles, nor in the consistent failure of a group claiming to be for the "Advancement of Science" treating such knee-jerk leftism as a "point of view."

Robert W. Whitaker
Washington, D.C.

EB virus and mono

I read with interest "Virus-Cancer Crosspoint" (SN: 11/8/75, p. 298). I must, however, correct a statement by Ms. Arehart-Treichel. EB virus antibodies *do* indeed appear in cases of infectious mononucleosis. Detection of EB virus antibodies in cases presenting with typical symptoms and negative heterophile is diagnostic for "mono."

Of interest to readers may be the fact that Burkitt himself has suggested that interaction of the virus with a chronically stimulated reticuloendothelial system, such as found in cases of malaria, may lead to formation of the lymphoma. Infection in the absence of this chronic stimulation, he suggests, leads to infectious mononucleosis. Interestingly, the areas of Africa where Burkitt's lymphoma is endemic are the same areas where malaria is found to be endemic.

Patricia A. Somsel
Microbiologist
Mercy Hospital
Muskegon, Mich.

(Patricia Somsel should take up the question of whether antibodies appear in mono with Dr. Guy de Thé. He says that they do not. However, de Thé is well aware that malaria is endemic where Burkitt's lymphoma is endemic and agrees that there may be a connection between the two diseases.—Ed.)

Quake predictions

Re: "Quake predictions: A plan for 'what if?'" (SN: 11/15/75, p. 300). Perhaps State and Federal officials in earthquake areas should consult with their counterparts in hurricane areas. Hurricane areas have well developed and effective evacuation, disaster response, communication and coordination systems and organizations.

While there are obvious differences in the required response to different types of natural disaster, there seems to be little justification for the pessimistic view of the chance of panic, mass exodus or economic collapse. It hasn't happened in other areas which receive early warning of natural mishap.

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