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COVER: A large microwave radio telescope, here being deployed from the space shuttle, is only one of the diverse satellites that may be built using a standardized core section called the Multimission Modular Spacecraft. The mms, the tiny hexagonal canister behind the telescope's antenna, would carry basic modules such as power supply and attitude-control equipment. See p. 140. (Art: The Boeing Co.)

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LETTERS

Demystifying 1976AA

In the initial excitement of the study of a newly discovered object, such as the unique Apollo asteroid 1976AA, some confusion and contradictory conclusions are likely to appear. Your story (SN: 2/7/75, p. 89) reflects some of these difficulties, primarily in the characterization of 1976AA as a primitive object chemically, probably similar to the carbonaceous chondrite meteorites. The discovery of a dark, carbonaceous object in a near-earth orbit would be very exciting, since in general this class of asteroid is confined to the outer part of the asteroid belt. However, early suspicions that 1976AA was carbonaceous were based on observations that unfortunately included a factor-of-10 arithmetic error that made this asteroid seem far darker than it really is. Later observations at Arizona, both polarimetry and radiometry, showed 1976AA to have an albedo of 0.21, making it quite reflective, probably in the upper 5 percent of asteroid albedos. Its color, also, shows that 1976AA is not carbonaceous. In fact, data obtained by Jon Gradie at the University of Arizona suggest 1976AA is most similar in surface composition to Apollo asteroid Icarus, which in turn has been suggested to be closely related to the "ordinary chondrites," which are the most common class of meteorites falling on the earth.

This tentative identification of 1976AA as an ordinary chondritic meteorite is by no means certain, nor does it answer the basic questions raised in your article concerning the evolutionary history of this body. The new observations do appear, however, to exclude the possibility that 1976AA is like a carbonaceous chondrite, and to make it somewhat more likely that this object originated in the main asteroid belt and not as the nucleus of a comet.

David Morrison
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Barriers to female equality

I think it is incorrect to think that barriers to women's equality are generally falling around the world (SN: 12/6/75, p. 359). Very few significant barriers have fallen for women in the United States, the world's most technologically advanced country. Lack of education and access to credit holds women in oppressive positions in the United States and other societies.

I would not applaud the efforts of the

Agency for International Development (AID) in its attempt to integrate women into its domestic trainee program. Past record has shown AID to serve primarily the interests of major U.S. corporations in development of their trade and investment policy throughout the world. This is also known as economic imperialism. Note that the occupations in which women are being trained are typical female roles: midwife, family planning instructors and paramedics.

The opening of trading cooperatives and credit institutions "aimed at women" rather than institutions operated with women will not effectively lessen the burden of women in oppressive societies. Until a society is willing to view women as equal participants in that society, women and women's work will continue to be exploited.

Rozanne Enerson
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More on kilometer

Herbert L. Gross's letter (SN: 1/10/76, p. 19) presents the different pronunciations of *micrometer* correctly. The dilemma he finds in relating this to the pronunciation of *kilometer* should not lead to any uncertainty about the correctness of the two pronunciations of micrometer. Even if real, the inconsistency is solely a problem for *kilometer*, which is where it lies. Probably over 90 percent of English-speaking people, including scientists, use a pronunciation that is inconsistent with all other metric pronunciations, suggesting that a kilometer is an instrument for measuring kils, whatever they are!

Contrary to usage, which we should not let rule here if we can help it, the common pronunciation, kilOMeter is a corruption, which I would guess may have originated with American and British soldiers and travelers, unfamiliar with the metric system, when they encountered Continental Europe. It's probably too late to stop it, but we ought to try. We would never think of saying "millIMeter" or "kilOGRAM". For consistency with the other units and the customary pronunciations for measuring instruments, we ought to pronounce it KILometer, and dictionaries give that as the preferred pronunciation.

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