

# SCIENCE NEWS®

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Incorporating Science News Letter

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**COVER:** Computerized axial tomography is a new technique that consists of shooting X-ray images of a particular area of the brain or body from many different angles, then combining the images mathematically by computer into a cross-sectional picture of the area. Reproduced here is a computerized axial tomography picture of the skull base of a patient. The technique has been revolutionizing medical diagnosis since it was introduced on the market in late 1973. See p. 170. (Photo: Pfizer Medical Systems, Inc.)

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# LETTERS

## Nuclear debate: Replies

I was greatly disappointed in the cross section of letters on "The Great Nuclear Power Debate" presented in your Feb. 21 issue. After reading the letters, I was very surprised at the number of people accusing SCIENCE NEWS of emotionalism. I can remember feeling that you had given a concise, clear, and accurate summary of the arguments used on both sides as I have seen them presented in a number of other journals and news sources. To see whether I had been wrong, I reread both issues. After a careful rethinking, I find the complaints of emotionalism and bias entirely unjustified.

Your restraint in forgoing reply is admirable.

I think the points in Mr. Yuhnke and Mr. Deimel's letters were well taken. But I am afraid the other letters demonstrate an old hazard in journalism: People seem to be accusing you of bias simply because you don't agree with their views on a very emotional issue. But cheer up! On close examination, the evidence is on your side. You've provided an accurate look at a very tangled issue—what more could a conscientious journal do?

C. David Rees  
Glenwood Springs, Colo.

(Mr. Rees's letter contained detailed critiques of three of the letters published in the Feb. 21 issue. We've had to omit his analysis for space reasons.—Ed.)

I think both John Douglas's article on the breeder and his editorial make a significant contribution to public understanding. Keep up the good work!

Mike McCormack  
Member of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

My heartiest congratulations and gratitude to you, and Mr. Douglas in particular, for presenting what I consider to be the most balanced and unbiased article I have yet seen regarding the nuclear power debate.

Paul J. Vitu  
Chicago, Ill.

I have read with interest the remarks of the critics of "The Great Nuclear Power Debate." Many critics used only hysterical tirades to refute John H. Douglas. One example was the reader who called Douglas

a jerk. By using such language, he put himself in the same category.

I haven't seen the critics present any valid facts yet. The few scientists whose letters appeared had vested interests in alternative sources of energy.

Emotional outbursts won't change the facts; the nuclear industry is the safest industry in the nation. No other industry has as good a safety record.

John R. Jay  
San Diego, Calif.

## Pronouncing on pronunciation

A typographical error in our recent letter (SN: 2/21/76, p. 115) may be perplexing some of your readers. The sentence beginning "Turning to these files we find . . ." should continue "that 82.5 percent of the citations for kilometer are for second-syllable stress and the remaining 17.5 percent for first-syllable stress." Some judicious listening by one of our editors at the recent AAAS meeting brought in further evidence, allowing us to revise these figures to 75 percent and 25 percent. This does not, however, reflect a general trend; rather a breakdown of all our citations from scientists alone indicates a split of about 50-50 in the pronunciation of this word.

May we also take this opportunity to comment on the letter by Harry L. Arnold Jr. in the same issue on the pronunciation of *joule*? We find in our files that *joule* is pronounced in the scientific community with variants rhyming with *fool* and *foul*. Both are perfectly acceptable. Turning to our biographical files we find for James P. Joule's surname testimony (albeit second-hand) that the variant rhyming with *fool* was used by such colleagues of his as Lord Kelvin and Prof. P. G. Tait. We have further evidence from more recent, though no less distinguished, scientists that Joule's family accepted this pronunciation. A letter from the late Sir W. Lawrence Bragg, Cavendish Professor of Experimental Physics at Cambridge, states that Prof. Harold Dickson, a friend of Joule's son, said that "the right pronunciation rhymed with *hole*, but that family quite accepted the pronunciation rhymed with *tool*." This is another of those many instances in which there is no absolute right or wrong. We see no objections to rhyming *joule* with either *fool* or *foul* or to rhyming *Joule* with *fool*, *foul* or *foal*. All these variants are attested and are thus included without prejudice in our current dictionaries. We recommend that each speaker adopt that variant which feels most natural.

John K. Bollard  
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