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COVER: Saturn, seen here from its largest satellite, Titan, in a painting by Ludek Pesek, will soon get its first close scrutiny from the Pioneer II spacecraft, launched more than half a dozen years ago. See p. 120. (Illustration: NASA)

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LETTERS

Small is beautiful

Your article "The Medium Gets a Message" (SN: 6/2/79, p. 361) struck home. I have created a weekly science series on the local "60 Minutes" of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation which is called "Science for the Small Man" and consists of appropriate technology for the Third World with particular reference to Barbados and the Caribbean.

Adequate funding has not been forthcoming in spite of great interest in applications of solar power, sugar cane as a source of gasohol, and new ideas in low-cost housing. The relevance of new scientific news in medicine — the direct effect of tomatoes and nightshades on arthritis, for example — has brought many phone calls. The small man can use the trickle irrigation of large plantations on his own garden, and above all he identifies with the small man who is not interested in quarks or supernovas, but sees science as a means of lowering the cost of fuel with a solar still with cane juice mash, and hotels using the abundant sun for solar air conditioning. This is, of course, without the benefit of large budgets for advanced camera work, but rather with interviews with local fishermen and farmers who see direct applications to their own livelihood. CBS would do well to ask their program directors to interview moonshiners who are making gasohol rather than demonstrate the gigantic wonders of science. "Small is beautiful."

Leo Narodny
Barbados, WI.

Home-made quilt

Re the Window Quilt (SN: 7/21/79, p. 41). This is the third summer I have simply boarded up several unnecessary windows in my home with one inch-thick polystyrene foam sheet.

It is easy to cut to fit snugly, and covered with decorative paper or hidden behind drapes or shutters, its appearance is acceptable.

I don't know its reduction of heat flow, but the increase in comfort is significantly noticeable.

Cost — about 12¢ per square foot.
Dennis J. Wells
Phoenix, Ariz.

Jovian art

I have a theory about Europa (SN: 7/21/79, cover). Jackson Pollock, on his way to heaven, stopped off near Jupiter and decorated the moon's surface.

Martin Gardner
Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.

Decentralizing energy

Your article on the current state of fusion research (SN: 7/21/79, p. 52) was very interesting. I was so fascinated by the description that my eye almost completely skipped over the small phrase pointing out that this complex and expensive technology produces electricity by boiling water. So we are expected to wait twenty more years and spend tens of billions of dollars for a better way to boil water!

Your magazine may not have heard of this yet, but there is a debate raging about centralized vs. decentralized energy. All of the articles in your special energy issue examined centralized energy sources only. I would like to see you deal with decentralized energy sources as well.

I can empathize with the seductive attraction of promoting fusion as a means of solving the energy crisis, since it allows some very high-powered pure research to be passed off as applied research. The social implications, however, are an increased domination of our lives by the energy monopolies.

Jack Dunn
Madison, Wis.

Speak English

SCIENCE NEWS is a truly outstanding publication, and I have been a pleased subscriber for many years. It probably is natural that, because it focuses on a specialized field, it should become more and more technical in treating subject matter. It is doing that — though most of the articles are essentially understandable to the informed layman.

Now, however, I must "gripe" (in a louder and louder "voice") at a noticeable trend in your articles and comments toward stating quantities and measurements *exclusively* (or almost so) in the metric scale. Kilometers, meters — yes, even the least defensible of all, centigrade units — are thrown at us without even the courtesy of a translation into the scale with which the people are familiar. Yet you no doubt desire the interest and support of those people. Those of us — and we are legion — who have not "bowed the knee to (the) Baal" of the metric system see no reason why — if you must state your findings in these strange terms (where the familiar foot-yard-mile have been understood and adequate from time immemorial) — you cannot show consideration by furnishing a "translation" thereof into familiar terms. Speak English.

John F. De Ford
West St. Paul, Minn.

Correction: The laboratory-grown insulin-producing hamster cells (SN: 7/28/79, p. 72) produce only 0.2 to 0.33 percent (not one-third) as much insulin as cells in the hamster. The cells do not produce infective SV40 viruses, but a special class of proteins commonly associated with SV40 transformed cells.

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