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Letters

Intervening ethnocentrism

I would like to comment on "The Man Who Would Be Anthropologist" (SN: 4/16/83, p. 252) by Wray Herbert. I found the article to be illuminating in two respects.

First, Mr. Mosher had an incredible opportunity to gather data that not only he, but the rest of the Western world would have benefited from, as well. It seems a pity that he chose to let personal feelings alienate him from the appointed task. People would agree that definitions of infanticide and abortion vary from culture to culture, and that Mr. Mosher apparently let his emotions regarding this very sensitive life issue disrupt his reason for being in China. The man probably would have had limited problems with Chinese officials if his ethical and cultural ethnocentrism did not intervene.

Second, the Senate subcommittee's involvement is justifiable and relevant because of the social and psychological turmoil which his visit created. I think Mr. Mosher probably could have avoided the anguish he is now experiencing if he had been a bit more scientific.

John Mangyn
Trenton, N.J.

MAY 7, 1983

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Cover: In the early Cambrian period, about 570 million years ago, shelled animals like trilobites with jointed legs (top) appeared in the fossil record. In the late Precambrian just before, the marine environment was populated by tubelike sponges and soft-bodied animals such as jellyfish and sea pens. Scientists meet this month to choose a boundary between the two periods. (Painting by John Gurche, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)



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Inaccurate inferences

I am writing in response to your article on the Ohio Wesleyan University-Ohio State University Radio Telescope ("Fore! Pulling turf from under a telescope," SN: 2/12/83, p. 101; see also p. 299). Although your article presented a generally factual account of the sale, it did make some inaccurate inferences.

First, your article suggested that Ohio Wesleyan made an impulsive decision to sell the land "out from under" our neighbors at Ohio State. This is not true.

Ohio State knew of our intentions to look for potential buyers as early as May 15, 1981, when I sent a letter to former Ohio State President Harold Enarson. In addition, former OSU Provost Ann Reynolds informed me in January 1982 that her university was looking to cease operation of the telescope by 1984. Based on those and subsequent communications, the Ohio Wesleyan Board of Trustees directed me to proceed with the sale.

Second, your article seemed to imply that the sale demonstrates a disregard on our part for scientific inquiry. Again, this is not true.

Although Ohio Wesleyan is an undergraduate institution, our faculty is actively involved in research. In the sciences, for example, nearly half of our faculty is funded by outside sources

including NSF, NIH, and industrial and private foundations. A member of our science faculty is currently in West Germany on a Fulbright Scholarship. Furthermore, several of our faculty hold editorial and elected offices within their respective professional societies.

We believe that research is vital not only for the personal development and professional growth of our faculty, but also complements the educational experiences of our students.

Evidence of the success of our commitment emerged in the fall when Ohio Wesleyan chemistry students captured the top three — and six of the top eleven — places in a national analytical chemistry competition in Pittsburgh. Biology students from Ohio Wesleyan University have presented research reports at national meetings and subsequently published their results in established journals.

The decision to sell the land on which the radio telescope rests was based upon what we believed to be a mutual decision by ourselves and Ohio State. The sale was conducted following careful deliberation and should not be considered evidence that we are retreating from our traditional commitment to the sciences and specifically to scientific research.

Thomas E. Wenzlau, President
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio

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