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Cover: NASA's first mission to the moon since 1973 may be the heavily instrumented Lunar Observer satellite, proposed for launch in the late 1990s. It would also be the first spacecraft to follow a polar orbit that would allow it to survey the entire lunar surface. Shown above the Observer is a smaller "subsatellite," to be deployed at the same time and placed in an elliptical orbit that lets it make measurements and relay communications from the moon's far side. (Illustration: Jet Propulsion Laboratory)

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Letters

Old twist on new approach

In reference to "Lime for your drink?" (SN: 2/24/90, p.127), here's another twist:

As a student pilot in the late 1950s, I became very familiar with the clouds of smoke that hung over Pennsylvania's Lehigh valley. The most visible smoke came from a number of cement plants, which sent plumes of lime dust high into the air. As I remember, these plants were either "cleaned up" or closed in the early stages of the antipollution era. Perhaps by doing so we inadvertently stopped the nation's first successful "watershed liming."

Jerome C. Day
West Orange, N.J.

Still debating Tasaday data

The comments made by John Nance and by Araceli and Cesar Hidalgo (Letters, SN: 2/3/90, p.74), regarding alleged "new primary evidence" introduced at the American Anthropological Association meeting, are misleading.

In fact, there was no "new primary evidence" at all, just a predictable replay of the old 1972 fantasy the anthropology community has long ignored or publicly rejected, as it was part and parcel of a media campaign mounted by PANAMIN, Marcos' oppressive ministry for tribal people, headed by "Tasaday" discoverer Manuel Elizalde Jr.

After a mere three-day sojourn at the caves of Mount Tasaday, sponsored by Elizalde and accompanied by former PANAMIN associates John Nance and Mafalo Dudim, the Hidalgos authored a paper contradicting all recent assessments of the original linguistic data gathered in 1972-73 in which others had concluded that the so-called "Tasaday" tongue was merely the local Cotabato Manobo. The Hidalgos then attempted to foist their report upon the AAA panel chairman. Yet when linguists asked for a copy of the paper, the Hidalgos refused to make it available for peer review.

I have since obtained a copy of their withheld field report, and it has raised many an

academic eyebrow. Among its more notable features:

- Its methodology, glottochronology, has been in disrepute with linguists since the late 1950s.

- It uses language found verbatim in the recent lawsuit filed by Elizalde against University of the Philippines scholars Zeus Salazar and Jerome Bailen.

- It concludes with the assertion that a so-called "Tasaday language" exists which is so old that it actually predates Austronesian settlement of the archipelago by several thousand years.

Are the Hidalgos serious? If so, this is a very sad day for Philippine science.

Judith Moses
Executive Producer
Mosaic Group Inc.
New York, N.Y.

Moses was the producer of an ABC News documentary on the Tasaday, "The Tribe That Never Was," which aired on "20/20" in 1986.

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