

THE third field meeting of the North of England Soils Discussion Group is being held at Merlewood Research Station, Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire, and in the Morecambe Bay area, during September 26-28. Further information can be obtained from H. T. Davies, National Agricultural Advisory Service, Yorks and Lanes Region, Government Buildings, Lawnswood, Leeds, 16.

THE ninth International Cancer Congress will be held, under the auspices of the International Union against Cancer, in Tokyo during October 23-29. Further information can be obtained from the National Organizing Committee, Ninth International Cancer Congress, c/o Cancer Institute, Nishisugamo, Toshima-ku, Tokyo.

A CONFERENCE on "Electron Nuclear Hyperfine Interactions in Spectroscopy" will be held in Wellington during October 17-21. Further information can be obtained from Dr. R. M. Golding, Conference Secretary, Royal Society of New Zealand, c/o Chemistry Division, D.S.I.R., Private Bag, Petone, Wellington.

THE sixteenth Canadian Chemical Engineering Conference of the Chemical Institute of Canada will be held in Windsor, Ontario, during October 17-19. Further information can be obtained from Dr. P. M. Reilly, Polymer Corporation, Ltd., Sarnia, Ontario.

THE sectional meeting of the World Power Conference, the theme of which is "Problems of Future Years in Energy Utilization", will be held in Tokyo during October 16-20. Further information can be obtained from the Japanese National Committee, World Power Conference, c/o Japan Power Association, Daido Building, 1-46 Shiba Minamisakuma-cho, Minato-ku, Tokyo.

A SYMPOSIUM on the "Optimization of Chemical Processes", organized by the Royal Institute of Chemistry and the Society of Chemical Industry, will be held at the University of Manchester on October 12. Further information can be obtained from Mr. L. Winestone, Geigy (U.K.), Ltd., Tenax Road, Trafford Park, Manchester 17.

A CONFERENCE on "Engineering of the Future in the Rubber Industry" will be held at Royal Leamington Spa during October 6-7. Further information can be obtained from Mr. A. L. Smith, Controller of Development Compounding, Tyre Compounds Laboratory, Dunlop Rubber Co., Ltd., Fort Dunlop, Birmingham 24.

THE sixth International Congress of Clinical Pathology will be held in Rome during October 3-8. Further information can be obtained from Segreteria del VI Congresso Internazionale di Patologia Clinica, Via dei Penitenzieri 13, Rome.

CORRESPONDENCE

We Wuz Robbed

SIR,—If the object of the World Cup series were to determine the identity of the best playing team, your editorial comment would be justified. But in fact its object, albeit inexplicit, is something much more sophisticated—the generation, abreaction and (one must hope) the control of aggressions in a ritualized form. Because we badly need an emotional technology of this kind I for one would be sorry to see it reshaped, unless it were in the direction of making the therapeutic acting-out more effective. For the operation to succeed, there must be a climatic final contest, there must be built-in uncertainties and unfairnesses (otherwise nobody would have the opportunity of being robbed in a context which does not generate military spirit), and there must be a referee to respect or blame: possibly the ritual would be more effective if, symbolically at least, he were eventually killed and eaten, but the present system is an insightful compromise.

The selection of the "best" team is accordingly a pretext for an important anthropological manoeuvre. That this manoeuvre has grown intuitively rather than as the result of planning adds to its effectiveness, and is typical of a rite. It is an inexpensive project compared with, say, the literal enactment of the shamanic enterprise of Moon travel, and with the restraint imposed by sportsmanship, however variously interpreted, I think it is beneficial. We have too few safe outlets for aggression, rivalry and boasting. We should not let scientism disturb those which we have.

I am, Sir, etc.,

ALEX COMFORT

Department of Zoology,
University College,
London.

Drop More Names

SIR,—I am a regular user of *Science Citation Index* (S.C.I.) and wish to comment on your recent remarks about it (*Nature*, August 6, 1966) because I suspect that you have not used the *Index* for its proper purpose, which is to search the literature for references pertaining to a current scientific problem.

Your description of the principle on which the *Index* is compiled is correct, but your statement of the fundamental idea behind S.C.I. and your implication that the use of S.C.I. is limited to the pursuit of this idea in any particular case appear to me superficial. In my view S.C.I. enables one to answer the questions: "Has it been done? Has it been thought of? Has it been criticized, proved, or disproved?" S.C.I. permits the questioner to exploit fully his own intelligence and experience in his analysis of the literature without having to rely on the arbitrary choice and use of key words by abstracters. An abstractor might neglect minor points which later become of major importance to someone else and might even misunderstand a paper.

The following example illustrates the way in which citations found in S.C.I. act as the "labels" by which "ideas" in the literature can be traced. A researcher planning an experiment to distinguish between certain hypotheses considers the range of possible results and their bearing on his hypotheses. Even at this stage he can make a list of the key papers to which he thinks he would have to refer when finally writing his own paper on this research, choosing this list so that it characterizes as many as possible of the aspects of his research. He now finds the citations of his listed papers in S.C.I. Publications which cite two or more papers from his list are likely to be useful. Many of those which cite only one can quickly be dismissed as irrelevant on the basis of their authorship, or the journals in which they appear, or their titles (which are found in the *source index*). If there are no relevant citations, the research worker's idea is probably new.

My experience suggests that literature problems can be solved with S.C.I., within an hour or two of raising them, more completely and quickly than with conventional abstracts. Your alternative suggestion of search by computer is open to the objection that those with the most to learn, undergraduates and graduate students, might not have rapid access to the computer service. Furthermore, although computers are quick, a citation service by computer would suffer from delays in booking time and in supplying in the correct form the information required for a search. The questioner would probably want to alter this information on seeing the results of the search, whereas the individual user of S.C.I. can modify his search procedure as he goes, according to his findings.

Yours faithfully,

MARTIN DAVIES

Harvard Medical School,
Boston, Massachusetts.