

concludes from extensive evidence that the answer appears to be a definite "no"; indeed that "no data can be found to suggest that any other conclusion is possible". You are aware of the passionate protests, which led sometimes to legal action, by people living in the immediate vicinity of London Airport, who suffered from the noise of jet planes. Imagine such protests, spread throughout most of the entire population of Great Britain, and you can picture the consequences of a regular programme of supersonic flights over populated areas. For the detailed evidence one must refer to Kryter's article, and to the reports he cites. He emphasizes that his conclusions are based on objective data concerning human response to sonic booms, and do not lean in any way on "humanitarian conjectures" regarding the effects of sonic booms on human health and wellbeing.

A full fledged programme of commercial supersonic flights across the United States, as formerly envisaged, would also lead to extensive property damage, estimated by Kryter from the available data, on damage claims due to sonic booms from military planes, as amounting to 40 to 80 million dollars per year. Our own estimates<sup>2</sup> from the same data would run several times as high as this. In any case the anticipated damage would be substantial, for both the Concorde and the American SST will produce booms with substantially higher overpressures than the military planes used in the tests.

Concerning the Concorde, your editorial states "it would, of course, be foolish to cancel the programme of development—the objective should be to get back as much as possible of the money which has been spent". We suggest that it might be wiser to write off the money spent as the cost of a useful lesson from bitter experience.

Many of the developments of technology in our time yield short term benefits while they degrade the total human environment, polluting water and air, and threatening the quality of life for future generations. In November 1968 a special study group of experts reported to the US Secretary of the Interior on "Noise and the Sonic Boom in Relation to Man". They pointed out that "every new technology carries its own adverse effects and these must receive attention equal to the technology itself. . . . Usually the public which reaps the benefits from a decision is different from the public which suffers the adversities. The decision-making should recognize both publics by providing for continuing work on both sides of the question, not at some distant time in the future but right from the moment of decision."

We hope that in future *Nature* may consider new technological proposals in this broader spirit, and not talk merely in terms of "getting back as much as possible of the money which has been spent". In the particular case of the Concorde, or of the American SST, a really critical appraisal of its commercial prospects alone might well have been enough to kill the project. In other possible technological developments, however, the immediate financial returns to the developers may well be very attractive, while the long term effects on the total human environment might be most deleterious. We trust that *Nature*, with its immense influence in the scientific world, will in future consider such projects in their broad implications for the human community in general.

Yours faithfully,

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<sup>1</sup> The Anti-Concorde Project, 70 Lytton Ave., Letchworth, Herts, England.

<sup>2</sup> Shurcliff, W. A., "SST and Sonic Boom Handbook" (Citizens League Against the Sonic Boom, 1968).

## New Constitution for British Physicists

SIR,—The recent article in *Nature* (220, 952; 1968) on the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society has drawn attention to the fact that many of the members are discontent with the proposed changes in the structure of the institute and society which are associated with the application for a Royal Charter. Professor Blackman's letter in *Nature* (221, 105; 1969) has given details of the reasons for the disquiet felt by fellows of the Physical Society, and I would like to draw attention to a matter which is of no less concern to licentiates of the Institute of Physics.

The proposed membership changes which accompany the application for a Royal Charter will have the effect of depriving licentiates of their existing right to the use of an abbreviated designation of their grade. For licentiates, who have the right to use "L.Inst.P." are to become associates who will have no right to the use of an abbreviated designation. I consider that this is an unjustified reduction of status, and British physicists should clearly understand that the "intangible" advantages of a Royal Charter are being sought at the expense of a real deprivation to licentiates.

Yours faithfully,

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## Appointments

**Professor Dan Lewis**, University College London, has been appointed a member of the **University Grants Committee**.

## Announcements

The **David Anderson-Berry Silver-Gilt Medal**, together with an award of not less than £100, is to be presented by the Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh during 1969 in recognition of recent work on the effects of X-rays and other forms of radiation on living tissues. Further information can be obtained from the General Secretary, Royal Society of Edinburgh, 22-24 George Street, Edinburgh 2, Scotland.

**CORRIGENDUM.** In the book review by G. H. Williams entitled "Radical Ion Chemistry" (*Nature*, 221, 494; 1969) the first sentence of the third paragraph should read "The topics reviewed are: electron spin densities and their determination (James R. Bolton); metal ketyls and related radical ions including a discussion of the ion pair equilibria in which these species are involved (Noboru Hirota); semidione radical ions (Glen A. Russell); the e.s.r. spectra of radical cations, with a short section on the preparation of these species (Gershon Vincow); . . ."

**ERRATUM.** In the article "Sex Determination Reconsidered" (*Nature*, 221, 410; 1969) "grandes hypotheses" should be "groundless hypotheses".

**ERRATUM.** In the article "Origins of Natural Gas and Petroleum" by W. G. Meinschein, Yaron M. Sternberg and Ronald W. Klusman (*Nature*, 220, 1185; 1968), the following corrections are necessary: (1) page 1185, column 2, last line should read: ". . . elements to form gas accumulations, and some gases, . . ."; (2) page 1186, column 2, line 7 should read: ". . . lines,  $y$ , equals the concentrations of methane normalized to methane equal to 100 per cent and  $y$  and . . ."; (3) page 1187, Fig. 3, curves  $A(a)$  and  $A(b)$  each should be shifted vertically until the upper end of each curve intersects the left  $Y$ -axis at 100, thereby normalizing methane to 100 per cent.