

Who in America and *Who's Who of American Women*. It has some surreal misprints—"enzyme" frequently becomes "engine"—but they are unlikely to confuse anybody. The book was assembled by an army of graduate students at Chicago University, which may explain how Marx and Reich got in. Chicago graduate students must be one of the very few groups of people in the world who look with favour at both of that pair of irreconcilables.

NICHOLAS EVANS

Correspondence

Ecdysone and DNA Puffs

SIR.—In the December 14 issue of *Nature* (220, 1078; 1968) your cell biology correspondent referred to a paper by Crouse (*Proc. US Nat. Acad. Sci.*, 61, 971; 1968) in which some experiments of ours were repeated concerning the prevention of puff formation in *Sciara coprophila* by cortisone. In our investigations of *Sciara coprophila* (Goodman, Goidl and Richart, *ibid.*, 58, 553; 1967) using cortisone (a chemical analogue of ecdysone), we found that puff formation did not occur in cortisone fed larvae. Despite the fact that no puffs appeared, cortisone fed larvae pupated at the same time as their normally fed counterparts, and developed, on schedule, into fertile adult flies. The removal of cortisone at any time during larval development permitted the resumption of normal puff formation. Contrary to what we reported, Crouse found no suppression of puff formation by cortisone but rather a prolongation of larval development.

Daily measurements of salivary gland DNA throughout the fourth instar correlate well with our cytological observations. Using the diphenylamine reaction we found that both normal and cortisone fed larvae show a gradual increase in DNA during the fourth instar. When puffing occurs in normally fed larvae there is a marked concomitant increase in DNA content. In cortisone fed larvae, however, there is neither puff formation nor an increase in DNA content. On the other days of the fourth instar, before and after puffing occurs, there is a two to three-fold increase in DNA in normal larvae and only slightly less in cortisone fed larvae. We therefore concluded that neither puff formation nor the increase in DNA associated with puff formation is essential for normal development.

Your correspondent suggested, as had Crouse, that the difference between our observations and Crouse's was due simply to developmental prolongation by cortisone acetate. This suggestion is not consistent with our findings. We find no developmental delay induced by cortisone; we regularly examine our cortisone fed stock (which is routinely maintained in the laboratory) and have repeatedly confirmed our original observations that puffs in cortisone fed larvae do not occur and that pupation is on schedule.

That puff formation is not essential for normal development does not in the least detract from the value of the giant Dipteran chromosomes as unique material for investigating hormonal control of nucleic acid synthesis.

Yours faithfully,

REBA MIRSKY GOODMAN

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Demise of a Department

SIR.—As a graduate trained in science now reading both history and philosophy as an external advanced student of London University in the Faculty of Arts, I was disturbed to learn of the predicament of the History and Philosophy of Science Department at University College, London (*Nature*, 221, 995; 1969). The case for retrenchment appears to rest solely on the high staff to student ratio and the feasibility of farming out these subjects to other departments. I believe the number of students in this department could be raised significantly almost overnight if the regulations in both the arts and science faculties were made consonant with the modern world. One of the most disturbing features of our educational system is the seeming inflexibility of the syllabuses in many departments and in the combination of subjects permitted. Why, for example, cannot history of science be offered at the history examination? And why cannot history and philosophy of science be examined at general level in both the arts and science faculties? Perhaps the threat of demise will now invoke answers to questions such as these.

The statistics for post- and undergraduate applications confirm the growing preference for the social sciences at the expense of more traditional disciplines, and the awareness of their problems. If we are to confound the "two culture" mentality, it is essential not only to provide a meeting ground for the arts and sciences but also to find enough students and teachers actually to meet.

To close the department would be an admission of failure to meet this challenge. I can think of no department in the university better placed to foster these qualities.

Yours faithfully,

ALFRED CREED

20 Hawkes End,
Brampton,
Huntingdon.

Museum on the Move*

SIR.—We are tempted to question whether the proposed removal of the bird collections of the British Museum (Natural History) from South Kensington to Tring has been given due and proper consideration.

There are several good reasons why this plan should not be implemented. First, it would seem to us that insufficient consideration has been given to the inconvenience it will occasion to the staff, who, if the plan is carried out, will be in complete scientific isolation from all the other branches of zoology previously conveniently housed under one roof. This availability is surely a great stimulus to research and consultation.

In the second place, we doubt whether the proposed new arrangement would prove convenient and acceptable to foreign scientists visiting this country to work in the Bird Room. London is London (especially to them), and at the end of each day's research they have been able to enjoy the social amenities offered by London without having to toil backwards and forwards to Tring. Furthermore, of course, the choice of hotels is far greater in London than it could ever be in Tring. Such decentralization is retrogressive and is not likely to be viewed favourably by any of these overseas visitors.

In so far as amateur workers are concerned, we are obliged to further our researches in our spare time and the loss of effective working time in travelling to and from Tring must be obvious.

Surely the sensible thing to do is to build the new ornithological department on ground already available at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, and

* These letters refer to an article in *Nature*, 221, 1094 (1969).

by so doing keep all the vertebrate zoological collections in the same museum. If any move is to be made, it should be, in our opinion, some other branch of natural science and certainly not a branch of the vertebrata.

To build a new Bird Room on ground already available would, we understand, prove less costly than the Tring proposal, which Mr James Allason, MP, has declared as "bad economy".

We sincerely hope that the birds will remain at South Kensington in a new Bird Room.

As an important branch of vertebrate zoology, they should not be transferred from London, where they can be readily available to all who wish to study them, with the least amount of trouble and loss of time.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES M. HARRISON
JEFFERY G. HARRISON

Bowerwood House,
St Botolph's Road,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

SIR,—I learn that the authorities of the British Museum (Natural History) plan to transfer all the scientific ornithological collections of the British Museum from London to the old Rothschild Museum at Tring.

Knowing the interest that *Nature* has taken in the discussions aroused by this plan, I should like to associate myself with the feelings of my British colleagues regarding the possibility of such a transfer, as well as the regret most of them have expressed.

In fact, the collections are so important that no ornithologist anywhere can remain indifferent to the prospect of their removal from London, for this would certainly limit considerably the chances of working among the collections by the numerous European ornithologists who go each year to consult them and who often have only limited time and resources for their stay in the British capital.

Yours faithfully,

JACQUES BERLIOZ

Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle,
55 Rue de Buffon,
Paris.

Country Life

SIR,—I am chairman of the sub-committee of the Biochemical Society responsible for the planning and organization of the Harden conferences. I was delighted to read in *Nature* (222, 112; 1969) the section provocatively entitled "Country Life". We are very grateful to you for publicizing these conferences. I may mention *en passant* that, although the hedonistic level in Wye probably will not be quite up to that of the Greek Islands or the Swiss Alps, it will be by no means negligible.

There are two points that I want to take up with you. The first is the question of the organization of these conferences. My committee decided that we would select a chairman and give him a free hand in selecting the topics to be covered at the conference and the speakers. He could be as biased and specialized as he cared to be. It was entirely his responsibility. The programme has been planned by Professor Phillips. He has, of course, consulted a number of people, especially Dr B. S. Hartley, about the details. It is my intention—and I hope the other members of the sub-committee will agree with me—that future conferences will be organized along the same lines. Our aim is to choose an area in which biochemistry overlaps with a number of disciplines and in which we are strong in this country. We are anxious to emphasize the European nature of these conferences both in the choice

of speakers and in the members of the conference. I have already an idea of the topic and chairman of the second conference. I hope I shall be able to persuade the committee that this is a good one. Of course, there is nothing to prevent a conference deciding that it would be worthwhile to have a similar meeting within the next year or two. There is scope for a number of Harden conferences in any one year.

There is a second point. I am a little unhappy about "Some scientists of proven stature are paid to come while the rest pay". The implication of this is that those who have to pay the conference fee are not of proven stature. I am sure from the applications that we have already received that this will not, in fact, be the case.

Yours faithfully,

A. P. MATHIAS

The Biochemical Society,
London.

Naming the Units

SIR,—Despite the fact that I agree with honouring the memory of Hubble, Lord Rutherford and many other excellent scientists (*Nature*, 219, 765; 1968), I feel that further proliferation of illogical prefixes will undoubtedly be a source of the greatest confusion.

Apart from the fact that the French never did call 10^9 "un trillion" but simply "un milliard", as others did in continental Europe, I am unable to find inconvenient the logical use of the old metric prefix system, which leaves the unit name comprehensive. The danger is, I think, that coining new names to designate simple multiples of existing units destroys "unified terminology which may help to remove ambiguity", as Professor Gamow puts it.

Yours faithfully,

B. PATAKY

Battelle Memorial Institute,
Geneva Laboratories,
Geneva.

University News

Dr W. V. McDermott, jun., has been appointed the first Cheever professor of surgery in the faculty of medicine at Harvard University.

Appointments

Sir Kenneth Hutchison, formerly deputy chairman of the Gas Council, has been elected president of the National Society for Clean Air, in succession to Sir John Charring-ton.

Mr M. W. Jensen has been named to serve as deputy director of the Institute for Applied Technology of the US Department of Commerce's National Bureau of Standards.

Announcements

The Symons Memorial Gold Medal of the Royal Meteorological Society has been awarded to Professor Sverre Petterssen, in recognition of his contributions to the science of meteorology and weather forecasting. The society's L. F. Richardson Prize has been awarded to Dr A. S. Thom, University of Edinburgh, as the author of the paper considered the most meritorious of those submitted by younger members and published in the society's quarterly journal during the past two years. The Darton Prize was awarded to Mr H. C. Shellard, Meteorological Office, Bracknell, for his article published in the society's magazine, *Weather*.