

CORRESPONDENCE

CO₂ Pollution of the Sea

SIR.—A recent communication (*Nature*, 245, 20; 1973) suggested that a slight increase in partial pressure of CO₂ would shift the HCO₃ equilibrium system far enough to prevent secretion of shells in marine corals and molluscs.

The lower carboniferous shells were secreted when the partial pressure of CO₂ was more than 300 times current levels (before the carbon of the coal measures was produced by species which themselves required high partial pressures of CO₂ to grow so luxuriantly).

The two statements are incompatible although the chemistry seems equally valid in both cases. However, I have never seen a systematic approach to palaeoatmospheric analysis and have long wondered at the ability of species to proliferate in spite of using an oxygen combustion system, in an atmosphere rich in CO₂, with primitive respiratory systems and inefficient internal oxygen transport arrangements. Popular assumptions about the primitive atmosphere may be wrong, otherwise ethologists have problems they have neglected.

Yours faithfully,

G. A. WOOD

13 Clifton Park Road,
Davenport Park,
Stockport

Are Conferences Necessary?

SIR.—As a means of communication of scientific data and theory, are conferences worth the money and effort being spent on them? Many think not, but

before such established and prestigious activity can be changed it is scientifically proper that experiments should be done.

Recently an attempt was made to break the established pattern by having a meeting based on the following concepts: (1) that satisfactory communication can only be achieved if the participants are limited to those actively engaged in relevant experimental work and who can sit around one, albeit large conference table; (2) that this close interaction between participants be maintained away from the conference table; (3) that participants should arrive knowing in detail the topics to be discussed; (4) that experiments to resolve some of the controversial problems described in the papers should be made at the meeting; (5) that these experimental procedures should be able to be changed on-line at the suggestion of the participants.

The subject of the conference was "Event Related Slow Potentials of the Brain" and was concerned with the changes of the electroencephalogram associated with external stimuli and with voluntary and involuntary motor movements ranging from speech to spinal reflexes. Forty-five invitations were sent to active workers in the field. It was estimated that about 200 people would have attended an unrestricted conference. The meeting was held in a relatively inaccessible college in which most of the participants were accommodated. Most of the forty papers were precirculated and only discussion was allowed at the meeting. One and a half days were devoted to experiments performed in the research laboratory of this Institute and relayed by closed cir-

cuit television. There was no mixing or editing of pictures from the four cameras as in normal television procedure; all cameras were on all the time and thus gave considerably more information than if the audience were in the laboratory. A television camera and microphone in the auditorium permitted participants to communicate with the demonstrators.

The demonstrations were separated into five sessions representing five aspects of the congress theme. They were presented by selected groups of participants with the help of the Institute staff. A total of 12 h television transmission was achieved.

There was good interaction between experimenters and audience and on occasions the experiments were modified to clear a particular point in dispute. These were experiments in the true sense of the word—procedures adopted on chance of their succeeding. All participants were enthusiastic about these experiments.

This format for conferences appears to be of considerable value in the presentation of data and organisers of meetings are urged to reconsider their objectives and methods and to carry out the necessary experiments.

Yours faithfully,

R. COOPER

*Chairman, Organising Committee,
3rd International Congress on Event
Related Slow Potentials of the Brain,
and*

*Scientific Director,
Burden Neurological Institute,
Stapleton, Bristol*

Obituary

A. G. Sharov

THE prominent insect palaeontologist Dr Alexander Grigorievitch Sharov died suddenly in Moscow on July 10, 1973.

Dr Sharov was born in 1922 in the village of Lukino, Moscow Region. While still a schoolboy he developed an interest in entomology, collecting insects and observing their habits and behaviour. After finishing school in 1939, he entered the Biological Faculty of Moscow University and specialised in entomology. While an undergraduate he took part in expeditions to the Far

East, Transcaucasia and Central Asia, where he collected material and made many interesting observations on the local faunas.

In 1943 Sharov was enlisted in the army and his military service lasted until the end of the war. He returned to Moscow University in 1945 and completed work for his diploma. In his student days, as in his later scientific work, Sharov was interested in the problems of insect ontogeny and evolution. His postgraduate studies began in the Institute of Evolutionary Morphology in Moscow, under the guidance of such prominent scientists as Pro-

fessors D. M. Phedotov and M. S. Ghilarov. In 1950 he was awarded a doctorate for his thesis on the 'proto-metabolous' development of the *Thysanura* and its bearing on insect phylogeny.

During the next few years Sharov's interests turned to fossil insects, and in 1955 he moved to the Palaeontological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. There he worked until his death on the palaeontology, phylogeny and evolution of insects. He took part in many expeditions, collecting much remarkable fossil insect material. One of his most important discoveries was

that of the new order Monura, which he considered to be primitive ectotrophic Apterygota.

Sharov's works on the fossil insects of the Kuznetsky Basin are well known and highly regarded by insect palaeontologists. Most of his new discoveries were of Orthopteroid insects, and in 1968 he published a monograph on the phylogeny of this group. This comprehensive study, which was published in an English edition in 1971, will no doubt be the standard work on this subject for many years to come.

Sharov published a total of sixty-four papers and books. As well as a first-class scientist, he was a friendly and charming person, and his loss will be felt deeply by his many friends and colleagues.

Announcements

University News

Professor D. Samuel, Professor of Physical Chemistry, Weizman Institute, has been appointed a Visiting Professor in the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, University College London.

Appointments

Dr J. W. B. King has been appointed director of the **Agricultural Research Council's Animal Breeding Research Organisation**.

Mr R. E. Boote has been appointed director of the **Nature Conservancy Council**.

The full membership of the **Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils** is now **Professor D. J. Finney**,

Professor A. J. Brown, **Mr A. H. Duncan**, **Professor J. C. Gunn**, **Dr J. Howlett**, **Professor K. W. Morton**, **Professor H. H. Rosenbrock** and **Professor M. Wells**.

Miscellaneous

Dr Basil Bard, Managing Director of the **National Research Development Corporation**, has been awarded the **Gold Medal** of the **Licensing Executives Society**.

Erratum

IN the article "Comparison between Ice Age and Present General Circulations" by E. B. Kraus (*Nature*, **245**, 129; 1973), equation 1 should read $\theta_s = \theta \exp(rL/c_p T)$, and Table 1, line 4, should read $T_3(^{\circ}\text{C})$. Ref. 9 should be changed to read Bonatti, E., and Gardner, S., *Nature*, **244**, 563 (1973).

Corrigendum

IN the article "Prostaglandin Production and Bone Resorption by Dental Cysts" by M. Harris, M. V. Jenkins, A. Bennett and M. R. Wills (*Nature*, **245**, 213; 1973), PGF_1 , PGF_2 and PGF_3 should read $\text{PGF}_{1\alpha}$, $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$, and $\text{PGF}_{3\alpha}$ throughout.

International Meetings

November 21, **Symposium on Acylation** (The Assistant Secretary, Society of Chemical Industry, 14 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 5AG).

December 5-6, **Food Hygiene and the European Economic Community** (Mr M. D. Ranken, BFMIRA, Leatherhead, Surrey).

December 6, **Feeding the Newborn: Comparative Problems in Animals and**

Man (Dr J. D. Sutton, National Institute in Dairying, Shinfield, Reading RG2 9AT).

December 6-7, **Physical Properties of Solids at High Pressure** (The Meetings Officer, The Institute of Physics, 47 Belgrave Square SW1X 8QX).

December 11, **The Penetration of Liquids into Solids** (The Assistant Secretary, Society of Chemical Industry, 14 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PS).

December 11, **Teaching of Physics in Electronics Courses** (The Meetings Officer, The Institute of Physics, 47 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QX).

December 14, **Glaucoma Symposium** (Office of the Director, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Division of Continuing Education, PO Box 20367, Houston, Texas 77025).

December 17-19, **Computers in Spectroscopy** (The Meetings Officer, The Institute of Physics, 47 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QX).

December 17-21, **Congress on Marine Waste Disposal** (Professor E. F. Frangipane, Institute of Sanitary Engineering, Milan Polytechnic, Piazza Leonardo de Vinci 32, 20133, Milan, Italy).

December 18, **Recent Developments in Antibiotics** (Dr J. F. Cavalla, John Wyeth and Brother Ltd, Huntercombe Lane South, Taplow, Maidenhead, Berks).

December 18-19, **Polysaccharides: their Physical Chemistry and Molecular Biology** (Dr D. A. Rees, Unilever Research, Port Sunlight, Cheshire).

December 26-31, **American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual General Meeting** (AAAS, 1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20005).

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