A fund has been established in memory of **Sir Dudley Stamp** for encouragement of geographical study and research, especially by young geographers. Further information can be obtained from the Joint Honorary Secretaries, Dudley Stamp Memorial Fund, c/o London School of Economics, Houghton Street, Aldwych, London, WC2.

ERRATUM. In the article "Direction of *in vivo* Degradation of a Messenger RNA" by Robert F. Baker and Charles Yanofsky (*Nature*, **219**, 26; 1968) 7×10^9 cells/ml. in the fifth line of the fourth paragraph should read 7×10^8 cells/ml., and in the last line of the fifth paragraph on page 28, within 0·5 of the completion of messenger synthesis should read: within 0·5 min of the completion of messenger synthesis.

ERRATUM. In the communication "Rhythmical Changes of the Electrophoretic Mobility of Erythrocytes after Irradiation with Increasing X-ray Doses" by Bernhard Tbibukait (*Nature*, **219**, 382; 1968) the legend to Fig. 3 should include the following: (○), $P > 0{\cdot}05$; (●), $P = 0{\cdot}05$; (×), $P = 0{\cdot}01 + 0{\cdot}001$. The author of this communication was Bernhard Tbibukait, not Bernhard Tribukait as stated.

CORRIGENDUM. In the article "Rosalind Franklin and the Discovery of the Structure of DNA" by A. Klug (this issue, page 808) the following corrections should be made: page 808, column 2, line 3, "helical" should read "helix"; page 809, column 1, line 16, delete reference 1; page 809, column 1, under "Historical Outline", line 5, insert "Wilkins and" before "a research student"; p. 810, column 1, 8th line from end, delete "detailed"; page 844, column 2, line 3, "and" should read "to"; page 844, column 2, penultimate paragraph, line 4, "solution" should read "structure".

CORRESPONDENCE

In Defence of Defensive Warfare

SIR,—Dr Gordon Smith in his review (*Nature*, **219**, 537; 1968) takes the position, from which few would dissent, that work designed to protect the community against CB attack is ethical, and that information of use to a potential aggressor is better not made public. Much, however, in regard to the work at Porton turns on the meaning of "made public". Here Dr Gordon Smith is probably in a position to know what the rest of the scientific community cannot—whether Britain really keeps potentially aggressive weaponry to itself, or whether, as many of us suspect, any discovery of this kind is automatically communicated for evaluation and manufacture to the Americans—possibly with the understanding that should we require them as a deterrent, American germ weapons will be made available through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. If this is the true position, it is more morally equivocal than Dr Gordon Smith implies—one argument for removing Porton from the Defence to the Health Ministry is that it would make such knock-for-knock fire insurance a little harder to maintain, if it exists.

Yours, etc.,

ALEX COMFORT

Department of Zoology,
University College,
Gower Street, London.

SIR,—In his long and useful review of my book (*Nature*, **219**, 537; 1968) Dr Gordon Smith accuses me of writing a "rather patronizing" passage in which he claims that I question his own motivation for working at the MRE and that I suggest that he has not fully thought out his own position. I know Dr Gordon Smith's views on this subject and would not dream of saying any such thing. Nor did I. If he reads the passage more carefully he will see that I was unambiguously speculating on what the attitude of Hippocrates might have been.

Yours, etc.,

ROBIN CLARKE
Editor

Science Journal,
Associated Iliffe Press Ltd,
Dorset House,
Stamford Street, London SE1.

Naming the Units

SIR,—On page 765 of the August 17 issue of *Nature*, under "Naming the Units" you print Professor Gamow's statement that "Great Britain, Italy and Spain have no special name for that number" (10^9).

On the contrary my dictionaries all give milliard as an English word meaning a thousand million.

Yours, etc.,

W. J. FARMER

89 Ewell Road,
Surbiton.

SIR,—For the mere number 10^9, is there any objection to Kilomillion ?

Yours, etc.,

G. CORDEROY

Oxford and Cambridge University Club,
Pall Mall, SW1.

Going Metric

SIR,—It is certainly true that great industrial and commercial benefits may be expected by the forthcoming conversion to metric weights and measures in England, but it is a pity that so little thought has been given to the disadvantages of a system so incompatible with human perception.

The fundamental operation of perceptual psychology is doubling and halving; this operation can be performed both faster and more accurately than any other fraction can be obtained. Common housewifely chores such as mixing ingredients or measuring detergent rarely require more than three successive operations of that sort. Thus the sixteen ounce pound and pint are ideally suited to the kitchen. Moreover, the scale of human portions of food is such that they are easily reckoned in small numbers of ounces. In metric countries, housewives are forced into subterfuges, such as successive halvings of the 500 gram metric pound, a process requiring three significant digits instead of two. Rather than combine four of one with two of another, they must reckon 250 and 125.

The number of significant digits is also increased when using centigrade temperatures. The Fahrenheit degree was developed to have a certain psychological reality to it. One degree F is a just-noticeable difference to most people, and fractions need not be considered. The degree C is simply too big. In metric countries the temperature of swimming pools and rain is expressed as two digits and a decimal, whereas in the civilized Fahrenheit world two digits alone do quite nicely, and negative numbers are rarely needed.

This is not to say that one cannot make do with perceptually unnatural scales, but something is lost in the pro-