

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<sup>12</sup> "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 Charrington.

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*.