their research will enable any Mars Rover programme that NASA or anyone else conducts.

A parallel for the creation of strategic research bases other than at the behest of a specific customer is the establishment in 1909 by the then Prime Minister, at the suggestion of R. B. (later Lord) Haldane, of the first laboratory for aeronautical research (as a section of the National Physical Laboratory).

The research initiated did not generate, but it certainly enabled, the massive aero-engineering programme subsequently forced ahead by the First World War.

Yours faithfully,

DONALD MICHIE

Department of Machine Intelligence,
University of Edinburgh

Hysteria on Hysteria?

SIR,—I am sure many of your readers are shocked and offended by your persistent efforts to heap ridicule on the Club of Rome and Professor Meadows. One cannot help but be reminded of the hysterical outbursts which greeted Malthus and Darwin. Certainly the utter limits of ridicule were reached in the alleged "comments" of the World Bank (*Nature*, **239**, 248; 1972).

The only sensible thing that can be discovered in these comments is an acknowledgment that the model of Meadows is right in its treatment of population growth.

It would surely be a waste of time and an affront to your readers to try to refute the "slashing" criticisms of the distinguished but as yet anonymous authors of this report. After all, this has already been done most thoroughly by some of the best minds in the US and elsewhere, but I cannot resist the temptation to quote the following excerpts:

Says the World Bank "report": "Meadows and his colleagues have made a patently absurd claim by ignoring the extent to which known reserves of raw materials may be still further increased by technical developments yet to come".

Say the US National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council (*Resources and Man, a Study and Recommendations*, 1969): "All postponements allowed for, however, it is clear that exhaustion of deposits of currently commercial grade is inevitable. When the time comes for living in a society dependent on scrap and on common rock, the affluent society will be much overworked to maintain a standard of living equal to that of a century ago".

To conclude with a citation from

Professor Ravetz's *Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems* which may not be entirely irrelevant: "The opponents of critical science will usually be bureaucratic institutions which try to remain faceless, pushing their tame experts, and hired advocates and image-projectors, into the line of battle; although occasionally a very distinguished man is exposed as more irresponsible than he would care to admit.

"In such a situation, it will not be possible for a leader of science to be both honest and tame; and if the establishment of science chooses to serve its paymasters rather than truth, it will be recognizably corrupt".

Yours faithfully,

S. V. VAECK

Central Laboratory of the Ministry of
Economic Affairs,
17a rue de la Senne, 1000 Brussels

Congress Caveat

SIR,—We have today received the registration form and second circular for the ninth International Congress of Biochemistry, to be held here in Stockholm on July 1–7, 1973, and would like to bring some facts to the notice of any readers who may be intending to participate in this congress. We consider that participants are being asked to pay an unrealistic sum for certain of the ancillary social events and excursions.

To quote a few examples: a steamboat trip has been organized through the Archipelago to the island of Sandhamn (conference price Sw.Kr. 75:–). However, the daily steamboat service to Sandhamn costs Sw.Kr. 24:–, excluding lunch. In addition, several companies have very cheap excursions through the Archipelago to the Finnish island of Åland. A water-bus trip around the island of Djurgården, including a visit to the 17th century ship "Wasa" will cost Sw.Kr. 27:–, while the tourist boat costs Sw.Kr. 7:–, and entrance to the "Wasa" costs Sw.Kr. 5:–. A conducted walk around the Old Town (conference price Sw.Kr. 17:–) is regularly available on Mondays and Thursdays at 7.30 p.m. for Sw.Kr. 5:–. A visit to the home and gardens of the sculptor Carl Milles (conference price, including transport, Sw.Kr. 25:–) is also available from the local bus company for Sw.Kr. 9:–. The prices quoted are valid at the time of writing.

It may also be of interest to participants to know that a month's unlimited public transport in the city and county of Stockholm is available for a present cost of Sw.Kr. 50:–. A booklet entitled *This Week in Stockholm* can also be obtained and contains full information of current tourist attractions.

We hope this information will assist participants to plan their visit to our city.

Yours faithfully,

MARIANNE ANDERSSON
TUDOR BARNARD
VIBEKE BERNSON
BARBARA CANNON
PER LUNDBERG
DAVID NICHOLLS
HEINZ NIKA
MATS OLA NILSSON
SOLVIG PALM
BERTIL PETTERSSON
ARNE SJÖQVIST
IVAR VALLIN

Wenner-Gren Institute,
Norrtullsgatan 16,
S-113 45 Stockholm

Repair Endonucleases

SIR,—With regard to the News and Views editorial "Mammalian DNA Repair Endonucleases?" (*Nature*, **239**, 308; 1972), we would like to draw your attention to the article we published last August (*Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.*, **48**, 662; 1972).

We have been in correspondence with Dr Brent and we agree that, in view of the similarity of the assay conditions and characteristics of the enzyme, we are describing the same mammalian endonucleolytic activity. Your readers might therefore be interested to know that, as we have shown, the enzyme is present in xeroderma and De Sanctis Cacchione cells and does not act at the pyrimidine dimer sites.

Yours faithfully,

S. BACCHETTI
A. VAN DER PLAS
G. VELDHIJSEN

Laboratory for Molecular Genetics,
State University of Leiden, and
Medical Biological Laboratory TNO,
Rijswijk (ZH)

Caution on Creation

SIR,—I was intrigued by your news editorial "Is Continental Drift Sacrosanct?" (*Nature Physical Science*, **239**, 137; 1972), especially when compared with your previous leader "Creation in California" (*Nature*, **239**, 420; 1972). I do not endorse the method of the California State Board of Education in imposing its views; and my academic specialization does not entitle me to a free subscription to *Nature* under your dispensation to heretics—surely a happy reversal of the methods of the Inquisition! But I should like to point out the possible value of applying the argument of the first article to the subject of the second. May I quote?

"It is one of the curious paradoxes of science as a human activity that where