

correspondence

Victimisation

SIR,—In your issue of July 12 you publish the appeal of Dr Peleska, the Czechoslovak scientist, to the World Federation of Scientific Workers.

Unfortunately, the WFSW has many allegations of victimisation against scientific workers brought to its attention, involving many different countries. For example, in the same letter as that in which I reported the receipt of Dr Peleska's letter to the vice-presidents of the federation, I also had to report two other allegations, in some respects even more serious. There was the case of Professor José Ferreira de Alencar, a Brazilian anthropologist and sociologist, who was said to have been imprisoned and ill-treated as a direct consequence of reports he has written on the social status of the people of North-East Brazil. There was also the case of Professor Horst Holzer, one of the leading sociologists in the Federal German Republic, who was dismissed in April 1974 by the Bavarian Ministry for Education and Culture because of his membership of the German Communist Party.

There is no doubt of the policy of the World Federation of Scientific Workers on the question of the right of scientists to work. It is, for example, dealt with in the Declaration on the Rights of Scientists, adopted at the Ninth General Assembly of the Federation in Paris in 1969. Thus:

"3.2. Scientific workers should have the right to work in accordance with their scientific capacities and Governments should endeavour to ensure this right.

"3.5. Scientific workers should have equal rights in their professions, regardless of sex, race, nationality, creed or political conviction."

We have affiliated organisations of scientific workers in 30 countries and they all accept these basic principles of the Federation. When a serious *prima facie* case of victimisation of a scientist is brought to our attention we refer it to our affiliated organisation if there is one in the country concerned, ask them to look into the matter and, where appropriate, either take action themselves or suggest possible action the Federation can take. In some cases in which we have intervened in this way appropriate remedial action has been taken. In other cases new circumstances have been revealed

which have put a different complexion on the case.

It is difficult to see what further action is open to us. The preamble to our Constitution states quite clearly: "The Federation will endeavour . . . to develop relations between scientists having regard to the autonomy of each organisation, to the equality of rights, to the avoidance of interference in the affairs of national organisations." It is difficult to see how an international body could be based on any other principle. Differences of practice between different countries are very great and appropriate allowance must be made for this. Very many useful initiatives have been taken by the Federation and the close contacts maintained between our affiliated organisations in different countries are beneficial to scientists and for science itself. Our aim must be to strengthen these contacts.

Yours faithfully,

E. H. S. BURHOP

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Ill reactor ?

SIR,—The United Kingdom is now not only a *de facto* but also a *de jure* partner in the Institut Laue Langevin, built around the high flux neutron beam reactor. Since we are equal partners in the running and use of the establishment, we might also claim an equal share in its name. Fortunately, the choice of a suitably alliterative British scientist is obvious. What could be better than to call it the Institut Laue Langevin Lonsdale. Such a choice may be justified on several grounds:

Kathleen Lonsdale was a most distinguished scientist, the first woman elected Fellow of the Royal Society. She was a crystallographer, hence her name has obvious associations with the high flux beam reactor.

Just as von Laue and Langevin, Kathleen Lonsdale was all her life a champion of dignity and freedom.

Changing ILL to ILLL would have the advantage that newspaper headlines could no longer be misunderstood, and there would be no danger of an announcement like "Ill Deputy Director Returning to England" causing anguish to Dr W. M. Lomer's friends.

Yours faithfully,

N. KURTI

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Anonymous refereeing

SIR,—It seems that the best way to obviate the misuse of the unilateral anonymity granted to reviewers is to extend anonymity to authors as well. When the reviewers get a paper from the editor but have no idea who the authors are or what their affiliation is, they would find less pleasure in making unnecessary and uncivilised remarks. In addition, the reviewers would be able to judge a paper more justly and without prejudice.

This bilateral anonymity programme is simple, and can work. And yet, after this is adopted I should like to go one step further in proposing that all papers be not only reviewed but also published anonymously.

The idea "publish or perish" did stimulate scientific research for a while. But it has now come to the stage where too much energy is wasted in unnecessary publications. I believe most scientists would agree that the total amount of papers published yearly could very well be cut 50% or more without showing any significant impediment in the progress of science. If this immense waste is allowed to continue, the advancement of science will actually be slowing down rather than moving faster. The main reason for this is that we place too much emphasis on the number of papers that a scientist has produced. One obvious result has been much unnecessary repetition.

If all papers were published anonymously, then the "status" of being a prolific writer would be diminished. The fight among authors about whose name should appear first would disappear. The scientific community could, furthermore, judge a paper solely on its merit.

My ultimate hope is to dissociate totally the name from the achievement. If Einstein were alive today, I believe he would not mind if people discussed and utilised the great theory of relativity without mentioning or even knowing his name. But I dare not advocate such a radical proposal at this time. Scientists are human, and as such must be selfish beings after all.

Yours faithfully,

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