

catatonia with probably irreversible mental damage.

In addition to the protest to Professor Snezhnevskii, the meeting also resolved to send a telegram to Dr Gluzman himself—the first time that this particular form of protest has ever been undertaken by the college.

Among those who spoke in favour of this action was Dr Denis Leigh, Secretary General of the World Psychiatric Association, who said that in his view the type of action envisaged by the college was welcome and much to be encouraged. □

## Oxford man wins large prize

PROFESSOR X has won for Dr Y from Oxford (who prefers to remain anonymous) a year's free subscription to *Nature*. Professor X is on 12 editorial boards and easily heads the list in *Nature's* competition (May 8); the runner-up could muster a mere nine appearances. □

THE effects of inflation on the prices of technical and scientific books are illustrated in this table of findings from a British survey. Eleven publishers submitted information for the survey, which was carried out by the Technical and Scientific Group of the Publishers Association. Each was asked to give the extent and price, on publication, of their new scientific and technical books (and new editions) published in the years 1972, 1973 and 1974. Where there were two editions

(eg, cased and paper) the cheaper was taken. In the case of 1974 they were asked to distinguish between publication in the first and second halves of the year. They were also asked to assign each book to a category, namely: A: books intended for purchase by undergraduate students; B: books intended for purchase by senior students, lecturers, practitioners, libraries, etc; C: books for which only a library sale is expected. The most rapidly rising cost was that of paper.

Year	Size of Sample	Total no. of pages	Total price (£)	Price/100pp (£)	% above 1972	
1972	157	44462	381.75	0.86	—	} Category A
1973	140	39062	390.15	1.00	16.2	
1974(1)	74	21343	218.25	1.02	18.6	
1974(2)	49	12029	138.75	1.15	33.7	
1972	100	29297	457.95	1.56	—	} Category B
1973	95	28831	483.53	1.68	7.7	
1974(1)	57	18511	333.95	1.80	15.4	
1974(2)	35	9657	179.70	1.86	19.2	
1972	31	12169	249.20	2.04	—	} Category C
1973	45	18842	397.00	2.11	3.4	
1974(1)	23	8696	231.50	2.66	30.4	
1974(2)	10	4073	163.80	4.02	97.0	

# correspondence

## Deep in Egypt

SIR,—Having carried out surveys during and after the Second World War in Libya, Egypt and the Sudan, I was very interested to read the article (June 19) on the project for producing power by diverting Mediterranean water into the Qattara Depression by a canal through the Alamein area. Your correspondent was incorrect, however, in ascribing the initial surveys and ideas for this project to Professor Bassler, an ex-officer of Rommel's army; it is much older than that. In fact it dates back to the previous war, since it was in 1917 that Dr John Ball, the Director of the Egyptian Desert Survey, lent a small aneroid barometer to the officer in charge of a British Light Car Patrol who was going to travel in the area. The officer came back without the aneroid but with a reading for the Qattara Spring of some 60 metres below sea level—and presumably with a somewhat tarnished reputation as a surveyor!

Dr Ball did not, however, forget this odd result; and in 1926 he was able to send a professional surveyor, G. F. Walpole, to make a more detailed investigation, which revealed for the

first time the full extent and depth of this remarkable feature. Describing this and other investigations in 1927 in the *Geographical Journal*, Dr Ball then suggested that the depression might be used as a source of power by diverting Mediterranean water into it through tunnels. Six years later, when a complete topographical and geological survey had been made, he published a long paper in the same journal, giving detailed estimates of the sizes of tunnels required, the energy available and the length of time (several hundred years) that the project could last. Clearly the rate at which salt will accumulate even from sea water is very much slower than the rising tide of silt in the upper reaches of Lake Nasser, even though with modern engineering techniques much larger channels or tunnels can be envisaged.

Dr Ball, like Dr H. E. Hurst who organised the comprehensive collection of data about the Nile Basin on which so many projects were based, belonged to a small band of British surveyors and scientists who worked for many years in Egypt in the early years of this century. With the wisdom gained from long experience in the area added to their native wit and scientific training, they

wrote a number of far-sighted papers which those who are now suggesting new versions of their projects will do well to study.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WRIGHT

Effingham, Surrey

## English and editorial boards

SIR,—Mr Andrewes describes himself as a hack. Nothing in the wording of his letter (July 10) suggests that the epithet is justified, but there are many people around editorial offices to whom it is applicable. Instead of confining themselves to turning poor into passable English, they seem to delight in trying to turn straightforward English into jargon. In a proof that came last week an editor was trying to get me pompously to refer to myself as 'the author'. Proofs of two papers sent to a microbiological journal a few years ago had been so mangled that I withdrew them and published them as originally written in *Proc. R. Soc. B*. A friend had a recent paper to a nutritional journal turned in places into germanic near gibberish. And so it goes on, making people who recognise clear English think that all scientists write badly.

If a paper comes within the province of a journal and seems to be scientifically acceptable, an editor's job is the elimination of ambiguity and prolixity. These are matters of fact. An editor can say: "This phrase could mean A or B. Which do you mean?" or "This amounts to so-and-so, which is only half as long as the original." It is no part of an editor's job to insert misconceptions about the English language, however sincerely felt, into someone else's paper.

Yours faithfully,

N. W. PIRIE

*Harpenden, Herts,*

## Fostering spin-off

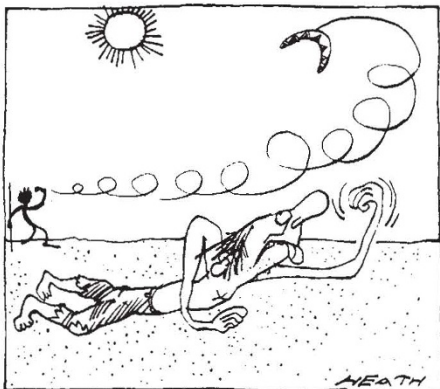
SIR,—It was with much interest that I read the recent paper by Isaacs *et al.* (January 24) on cyclogenesis by motor vehicle movements. I wonder how many people outside Australia are aware that the Aborigines have been making use of this principle for centuries. Why else would their rain making dances consist of a steady clockwise progression?

Related to this, I am at present working on a theory that the drying up of central Australia followed the invention of the boomerang, whose anticlockwise rotation would inhibit cyclonic activity. As happens with most revolutionary ideas, however, I have been having trouble funding this programme.

Yours faithfully,

K. H. LLOYD

*Salisbury Heights, South Australia.*



## Darwin's cancer research

SIR,—In considering the scope of subject matter relevant to the study of cancer, Stoker (April 17) suggests that much of cell-oriented biology may have such implications. It may, but it would be shortsighted to stop there. Natural selection has obvious relevance, at least obvious to an evolutionary biologist, and Cairns (May 15) has discussed this explicitly. It has also become central to immunology. My only contribution to oncology came as a direct result of work in palaeoecology. Theoretical frameworks that develop in one subject often have application elsewhere, and this really cannot be foreseen. Would

the Imperial Cancer Research Fund have supported Darwin?

Yours faithfully,

LEIGH VAN VALEN

*University of Chicago,  
Chicago, Ill. 60637*

## Integrity in science

SIR,—I am sorry that the only comment accompanying my letter (June 12) mainly concerns its occasion and not its essence. I would gladly ignore it, but the claims of truth preclude that luxury.

Mr. Maddox's suggestion that the non-appearance of his leader resulted from the "offensiveness and repugnancy" of the correspondence is false. The article was promised, "before the end of the year", on November 24, 1969. Successive (polite) enquiries from Lord Soper and me brought such replies as "the article is now almost ready" (January 21, 1970); it would be delayed "a week or two" (end of March 1970); until Lord Soper's final inquiry (July 6, 1970) brought no reply—or the article. It had been promised in place of my reply to Professor Sygne who had written (*Nature*, 219, 790; 1968) that "as the result of a lengthy correspondence with Professor Dingle" he and I had agreed that either "the concepts used in the special theory of relativity as ordinarily understood" or "the concept of clocks that run regularly, as understood by Professor Dingle" must be abandoned. Since my concept of such clocks has never been represented as other than an instrument so recognised by a standard observatory, the only relevant property I required being an inability of one to run concurrently both faster and slower than another, it was now clearly mate in one move. Maddox made that move impossible by steadfastly suppressing my rejoinder; it has never appeared. (Incidentally, his statement now that I have "shifted my ground" since 1968 is here seen clearly to be false: Sygne's diagnosis is identical with my position as stated in my recent letter).

Maddox should have quoted more of my letter of April 6, 1971; it ran: "In view of the failure of all other means of getting a straightforward answer to my criticism of special relativity . . . I have been, with great reluctance, forced to the extreme measure of writing a book describing the course of the whole series of evasions . . . I write this final letter, which will be included in the book if necessary, to invite you to give your own explanation of your attitude, which I promise to include verbatim. I repeat what I have said before—that my sole object is to get this matter settled, first of all with absolute openness and avoidance of all further evasion and quibbling, and secondly,

provided that that is done, with the minimum of sensation and unpleasantness. Action on your part, even now, would make a full exposure of the ethical aspect of the matter unnecessary". Your readers can judge whether the "offensiveness and repugnancy" of this letter adequately excuse the succession of broken promises a year earlier.

There was a sequel to "the recent incident" as related by Mr. Maddox. The author of the article mentioned subsequently asked for his side of the story (although, since it had already appeared in the Editorial, this might well seem redundant) and was given a vague statement that implied, if anything, that the "promises" ascribed to me had another source than that which he now owns, which was "even more full of somewhat unrealistic threats". I know of no letter which can be so interpreted. It was to prevent a recurrence of such misrepresentation and for that reason alone that I felt it necessary to record the actual facts.

I suppose I must reply once more to the charge that "Dingle's confusion stems from his assertion that special relativity requires that the differences of rate should 'actually and not merely apparently' occur. The truth, of course, is quite the opposite." Whenever the special relativity effects of motion are invoked to predict or explain something observable (for example, asymmetrical ageing, cosmic-ray behaviour . . .) they are held to be "actual", whenever this leads to a contradiction they become only "apparent"; and anyone to whom this is unacceptable is deceived by "commonsense". The letter I have called "L" completely refutes Maddox's statement. His technical example involving "lasers" and "algorithms" refers to a completely different phenomenon which has nothing at all to do with the matter.

I withhold comment on the rest of Maddox's letter, remembering what Shakespeare said about painting the lily, and leave your readers to judge whether Maddox is right in denying that there is "an ethical issue" here. I am sure, however, that the many who agree with me that there is, will require a plain, direct answer to my question if they are to retain their trust in the integrity for which the scientific world has in the past been justly noted. I most earnestly hope that among those with authority and responsibility in this matter, there will not be wanting someone ready to have done with "double-thinking", to clear his mind and words of cant, and to exhibit the candour and courage needed to provide such an answer.

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT DINGLE

*Purley, Surrey*