

useless") to homeopathy (described as "quackery"). For example, it makes much of the fact that the lead author of a study on the growing popularity of such practices published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* is a fellow of the Fetzer Institute, a body explicitly committed to integrating Eastern values into Western medicine.

There is much to be gained from *Probe's* investigative zeal. Partisanship (as Stone himself demonstrated) is no enemy of good journalism. The value of a free press lies in the belief that the imaginative exercise of a journalist's talents, whatever his personal convictions, is essential to an open democracy. And criticism of science can often, as Zimmerman points out, be based on inadequate information or misunderstanding.

But excessive partisanship can be self-defeating. And *Probe* frequently goes too far. It attacks the ideological partisanship of others (for example, those who criticize the profit-seeking of the drugs industry rather than that of health insurance companies). Yet it seeks to deny its own, claiming that all it is trying to do is to defend science as a "rational, self-correcting process of discovery".

This is a formula for lively writing. But, unlike Dan Greenberg's established *Science and Government Report*, *Probe* aims explicitly to head off critical debate on the dominant values of the scientific community. As such, it is not always a formula for good journalism. □

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## Mixed bag

Carmen Pryce

**Public Understanding of Science.** Editor John Durant. IOP Publishing. 4/yr. £115, \$236 (institutional); USA and Canada \$81, Europe £31.50, elsewhere £37.75 (personal).

A STRAIGHTFORWARD title that says what it means and means what it says? I was expecting a readable scientific magazine full of colour pictures, enlightening graphics and articles from 'famous' living scientists who look like they've got it going on (Euro translation: they know that they are living in the 1990s and that the year 2000 is just around the corner). I was looking forward to something that would galvanize me, as a member of the public (which includes us all), into taking an active interest in science. I was wrong. So, as a broadcaster specializing in popular science, I read on. The review starts here.

Because one or two people think the Sun goes around the Earth, do we need "a reliable and valid multi-item scalar mea-

sure of scientific understanding... to assist in the analysis of the relationship between the science and the public" (J. Durant, G. Evans and G. Thomas)? And while 'the public' presumes that scientists make more mistakes than new discoveries, is it really worth studying the utterances of a Cumbrian sheep farmer and extrapolating the findings to everyone outside the world of science and technology?

Page upon page of scientific deliberation — which I assume corresponds to a lot of time and money — only to come out with such statements as: "The best communication process in the world cannot replace good government" (S. Bader and M. Shortland). Call me a party-pooper but this smacks of science for the sake of scientists.

This was my view of *PUS* until I got to the Chernobyl special issue. It was like reading an entirely different journal. Helene Knorre's "The star called Wormwood" was concise, informed, interesting and powerful (I didn't know that the English translation of 'Chernobyl' is 'Wormwood', which is also the name of a star, reference to which can be found in the Bible (Revelation 8: 10–11)). I pondered the idea of the article being smuggled out of the former Soviet Union, translated from hand-written Cyrillic into English and published only after the fall of Communism. The truth is probably more prosaic.

Although the Chernobyl issue did not keep up the pace, it didn't fall into the deadly uninteresting category. This is *PUS's* biggest problem; it's such a mixed bag, you never know what you're going to get. Vol. 2 No. 2 should be subtitled: 'Do not read more than the multi-lingual abstracts'. "Recepción y rechazo del conocimiento científico? elección, estilo y cultura familiar" — sounds fascinating.

On the other hand, the current issue could be subtitled: 'Everyone a winner'. It contains an article on screen portrayals of scientists, a study of science and technology reporting in British national newspapers (the *Guardian* and *The Times*), and a discussion about common sense (my favourite subject). I was happy and willing to read from cover to cover.

But the bottom line is that *PUS* seems generally to be scientifically written by socially conscious researchers for their brethren, scientists and technologists — with the appropriate jargon and sentiments to appeal. Any member of 'the public' who stumbles across *PUS* in the library is liable to have his or her beliefs and perceptions about the scientific fraternity well and truly confirmed. □

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## Also submitted for review

The following is a list of journals received that were eligible for review but which for one reason or another are not covered in the preceding pages. The list does not include journals sent in that had not published enough titles to be considered.

*Acta Diabetologica* (Springer)  
*Animal Welfare* (Universities Federation for Animal Welfare)  
*Aquatic Conservation* (Wiley)  
*Epithelial Cell Biology* (Springer)  
*Ethics and Behavior* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*European Journal of Dermatology* (John Libbey Eurotext)  
*Formal Methods in Systems Design* (Kluwer)  
*Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters* (Blackwell Scientific)  
*Industrial Crops and Products* (Elsevier)  
*Integrated Ferroelectrics* (Gordon & Breach)  
*International Journal of Aviation Psychology* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*International Journal of Intelligent and Cooperative Information Systems* (World Scientific)  
*International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research* (Wiley)  
*International Journal of Modern Physics D: Gravitation, Astrophysics, Cosmology* (World Scientific)  
*International Journal of Modern Physics E: Nuclear Physics* (World Scientific)  
*International Journal of Oncology* (National Hellenic Research Foundation)  
*Journal of Aquatic Ecosystem Health* (Kluwer)  
*Journal of Biopharmaceutical Statistics* (Dekker)  
*Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*Journal of the Learning Sciences* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*Journal of Narrative and Life History* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*Journal of Nonparametric Statistics* (Gordon & Breach)  
*Journal of Research on Adolescence* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*Journal of Science Education and Technology* (Plenum)  
*Journal of Systems Engineering* (Springer)  
*Language Acquisition* (Lawrence Erlbaum)  
*Machine Vibration* (Springer)  
*Medicine, Exercise, Nutrition and Health* (Blackwell Scientific)  
*Microbeam Analysis* (VCH)  
*Nanobiology* (Carfax)  
*Optimization Methods and Software* (Gordon & Breach)  
*Oral Oncology* (Pergamon)  
*Ornis Svecica* (Swedish Ornithological Society)  
*Progress in Natural Science: Communication of State Key Laboratories of China* (Science Press, Beijing, China)  
*Tobacco Control* (BMJ Publishing Group)  
*Transgenic Research* (Chapman & Hall)