

eyes, and perhaps mine are naïve. We must, however, be aware that there is a substantial fraction of the human race that will almost automatically show prejudice against anyone who is *different*. Race, creed, and color are not the only criteria. One sees prejudice against the poor, the rich, the members of certain clubs and the nonmembers; against physicists by engineers and against engineers by physicists and against both by the so called "nontechnical" people; against drinkers by teetotalers and vice versa. There is prejudice by the young against the old and by the old against the young.

There is no end to the list. Employees often consider their employers as oppressors, and employers have been known to regard their employees as cattle. One must, therefore, suggest that race and religion are not the causes of prejudice, but merely convenient handles on which to hang hate by those who are so predisposed. It is the predisposition to prejudice that we need to eradicate, and very little seems to be known about this particular type of neurosis. A Chicagoan says that everyone living west of the Rocky Mountains is stupid; a resident of New Jersey alleges that all residents of Virginia are bigoted devotees of slavery. Some Californians think that all residents of Alabama and Mississippi are subhuman. My wife was once criticized by neighbors for not watching daytime television, and I have been treated coldly for such diverse characteristics as not playing bridge, having an engineering degree, reading detective stories, being fat, writing letters to editors and not being a member of the bar.

Again, the disease is the predisposition to prejudice, not its manifestation against a particular object. For those so disposed can *always* find an object. We should study the disease, rather than the symptoms.

Lawrence Fleming
Pasadena, California

Reviewers and anonymity

In a recent letter (PHYSICS TODAY, November, page 12) Moody L. Coffman suggested that objectivity would be

enhanced in the reviewing of submitted manuscripts if either the author's name would be concealed from the reviewer or the reviewer's name would be revealed to the author. In response to this letter, Samuel A. Goudsmit commented (January, page 12) that Coffman's suggestion about concealment of the author's name was excellent but that "unfortunately, it is impossible." (Goudsmit did not comment on the second possibility of revealing the reviewer's name to the author.)

I assume that Goudsmit's comment refers to the impossibility of enhancing objectivity by following Coffman's first suggestion because of the impossibility of concealing an author's name from the reviewer. If it would, indeed, not be possible to conceal the author's name *in all cases*, then certainly nothing would be gained by attempting to do so (neither would anything be lost!). However, I find it very hard to believe that this assertion is true. Of course the reviewer could guess the identity of an author with some degree of certainty in those cases when the subject of a manuscript is a part of a series of research papers on a program that is uniquely the author's—that is, where very few (or no) others have joined in with his program of research. On the other hand, from glancing over the literature for the past ten years or so, it is clear that such cases occur only a (disappointingly!) small fraction of the time. We are living in an age of "bandwagon physics." When, for example, 80 people are all doing active research in the study of the representation of internal symmetry groups to describe elementary particles, I would have serious doubts about any reviewer's ability to pinpoint, with certainty, the identity of the unnamed author. In many instances the reviewer might have a strong feeling about the possible identity of the author; yet, so long as he is *not certain*, the objectivity of his review is bound to be enhanced, as contended by Coffman.

Along with any advantages of the "bandwagon" approach to physics research, a definite accompanying ill, which is hard to ignore, is the strangulating effect on science that is induced by some loss of objectivity. Anything

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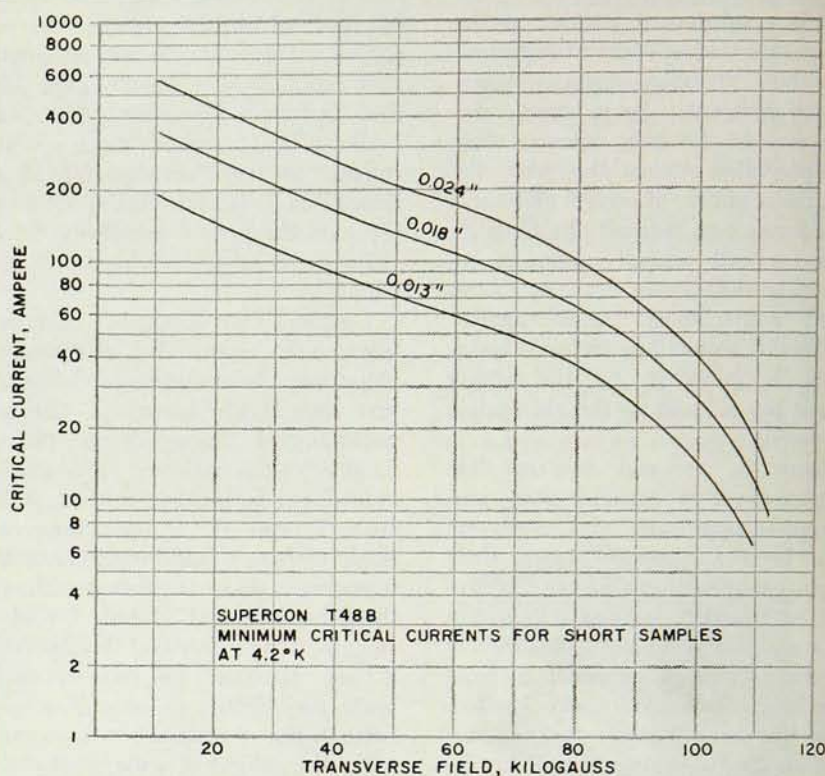
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LETTERS

that could restore this objectivity, at least in part, would certainly act for the good of scientific progress. I am quite convinced that if either of Coffman's suggestions should be adopted as a general editorial policy in our journals, the net effect could only be positive.

I should like to offer one further suggestion, which is also based on the recognition that reviewers and authors are indeed human. To further enhance objectivity in the reviewing process, I would suggest that although the reviewer should be an expert in the subject matter of the considered manuscript, he should not be one who is working directly on the same problem or on very closely allied research. If the editor of a journal is unaware of a referee's close connection with a particular problem, then upon receipt of the manuscript, the referee should disqualify himself—just as a juror is required to do so in a court of law when there might be personal reasons that could prejudice his decision.

Mendel Sachs
State University of
New York at Buffalo

ERRATA: Thank you for the way my talk on "Bad Luck" was presented in the January issue. Unfortunately I myself made a few errors in the references, and since those are of some importance in a paper of somewhat historical nature, I hope you will publish a correction:

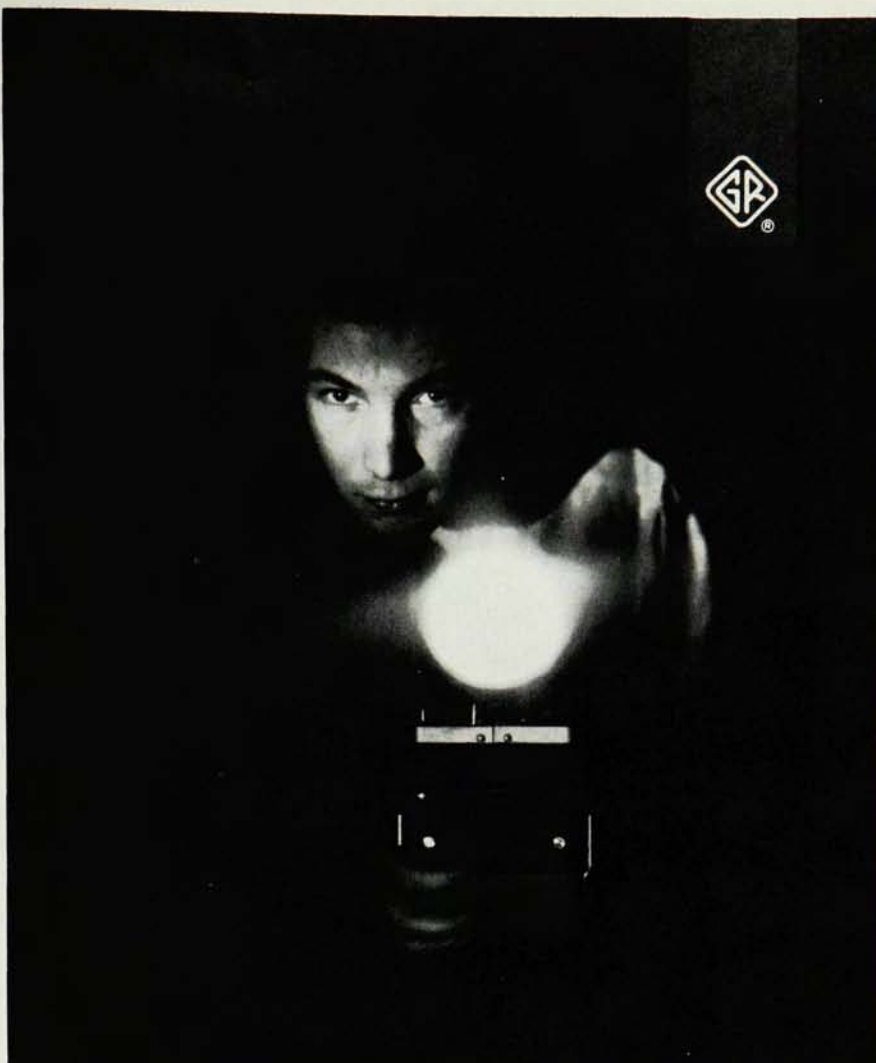
On page 77, column 1, line 7, read "the expected effect^{4a}."

On page 77, column 1, line 14, read "sunlight^{4b}."

Change the references to read as follows:

- 4a. C. J. Gorter, Leiden Comm. 247a, Physica 3, 995 (1936).
- 4b. C. J. Gorter, Physica 1, 199 (1934).
5. C. J. Gorter, Arch. Teyler 7, 378 (1933); C. J. Gorter, H. B. G. Casimir, Physica 1, 306 (1934); Phys. Z. 35, 963 (1934).
6. A. D. Fokker, C. J. Gorter, Z. Phys. 77, 166 (1932).

C. J. Gorter
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