

and in the right season bird watching in the Danube Delta is, we understand, a unique experience.

Furthermore, there are important humanistic benefits from a lecture or research tour in Romania, or even in a mere stopover of a few days on a conference orbit. Our government has rightly emphasized the importance of "building bridges" between the two great power blocks. World peace may well depend upon the mutual understanding and affection such visits engender. The Romanian people desire increased ties with the free world. Insofar as the realities of geopolitics allow, the Romanian government pursues a course of economic and political independence. In a small way, perhaps our visits can accelerate political liberalization. It is a worthy effort for an American scientist.

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The day or the second?

In the September issue of *PHYSICS TODAY* your man Phimsy mentioned Edward A. Rossit's proposal for a decimal system of time. However, I disagree with Rossit's opinion that the day is "the most rational of present units." I hold that it is the second.

As anyone who has studied the various systems of units that have been proposed over the years knows, the second is universally chosen as the basic unit of time (for example, meter-kilogram-second, centimeter-gram-second, centimeter-gram-seventh-second, meter-gram-second, quadrant-eleventh-gram-second, millimeter-milligram-second, meter-tonne-second, meter-kilogram-force-second, foot-pound-mass-second and foot-pound-force-second).

A CORRECTION: The editors apologize for two serious errors that they introduced and did not check with the reviewer in Frank Oppenheimer's review of *Lawrence and Oppenheimer* (*PHYSICS TODAY*, February, page 77). In the picture caption we identified Robert Oppenheimer as Frank Oppenheimer. In the text we identified Charles Lauritsen (father) as Thomas Lauritsen (son).

Thus, I would suggest the present value of the second be retained. I would also suggest that the units of hours and minutes be deprecated and in their place be adopted the kilosecond as a medium value of time between a day and a second. Using this system the time in one day would vary from 1 sec, one second after midnight, to 86.4 ksec, the next midnight. Other times in kiloseconds would be as follows:

1:00 a.m.	3.6
2:00 a.m.	7.2
3:00 a.m.	10.8
6:00 a.m.	21.6
9:00 a.m.	32.4
12:00 noon	43.2
3:00 p.m.	54.0
6:00 p.m.	64.8

This system of telling time has the advantage that it is immediately obvious and logical to anyone familiar with the metric system.

On the practical side, watch and clock movements with digital readouts could be manufactured economically. And if television programs were standardized at 3.0 ksec in length and networks could cram an additional program into prime time.

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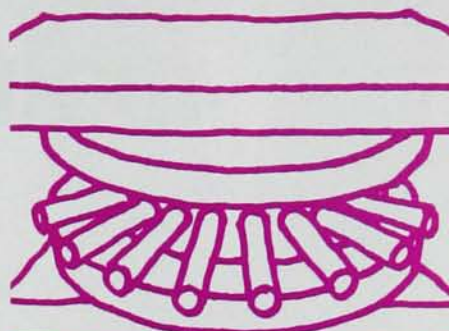
A COMMENT FROM BLITZSTEIN (whose letter on the subject Phimsy printed in February): One must consider the confusion that will occur when the change is made. The problems that lasted for centuries when the Gregorian calendar was introduced are a case in point. A minor change in astronomical time keeping (counting a day from midnight to midnight instead of noon to noon) still causes confusion in reckoning time intervals in day and decimals thereof for events that occurred before 1925.

The increased use of electronic computers for processing various kinds of data has reduced the need for expressing time or any other variable in the most useful or practical units. Conversions take but microseconds of computer time.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that reform of the present system of time units in common usage is not urgent in the sense that difficulties are being experienced with it.

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