letters

continued from page 15

us and vulnerable to criticism, while we know very little of the form fusion reactors will eventually take. However, one interesting counter point derives from the fact that the principal danger from fission reactors is tritium; of the 0.3 mrem projected as the average exposure to members of the general public in the year 2000, 0.15 mrem is from tritium releases.[1] This exposure should induce fatal cancers in above five Americans per year.[2] By contrast, best estimates of the average death rates from the nuclear accidents that are drawing so much attention will be 0.3 Americans per year, and even if the emergency-core-cooling system *never* works, it will be only 30 per year. (This is still a thousand times fewer than the deaths that would be caused by a coal-fueled electric power system.)

The counter point is that if our electric power were produced from fusion, the amount of tritium produced would be 10^5 times greater than if it is produced from fission. The details of how this tritium is to be handled are not yet known, but can anyone really believe that 10^5 times as much tritium can be handled without releasing more to the environment?

References

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Report ORP-CSD 72-1 (1972).
2. "The Effects on Populations of Exposure to Low Levels of Ionizing Radiation," Report of BEIR Committee, National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council.

BERNARD L. COHEN
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Developing countries

I would like to announce to your readers a special session to be held at the 1975 Annual Meeting in Anaheim, sponsored jointly by the American Association of Physics Teachers and the Forum on Physics and Society, and to call for contributed talks.

The session will be called "Physics in the Developing Countries," and there will be three invited talks. One will be by a member of the Committee on International Education in Physics to describe the Physics Interviewing Project; he will describe the state of physics in the countries he visited as well as the attitude of students and faculty toward these unofficial representatives of US physics departments. (At one university, our visit touched off a formal day-long debate on the political implications of the interviews). Another invited talk will be a distinguished physicist from a developing country and the third by an American who has worked for an extended period teaching physics in another society. We would welcome suggestions, particularly for this latter speaker.

"Contributed" talks will be welcome but, regrettably, there must be some selection. Since there is to be only one session, which already has three scheduled half-hour talks, there can be no more than an hour for ten-minute contributions. We will be forced to select from those that appear to have the most general interest in order to have a geographical distribution and to include both higher and secondary education.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who might like to describe his experiences at Anaheim. Not all can be accepted, but, in any case, the CIEP is looking forward to discovering more people with interest and experience in developing countries who might be called upon in future projects.

MICHAEL P. GREENE
Chairman, Committee on International Education in Physics
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742

Boyle's Law not his

The letter of H. K. Schurmann (October 1973, page 15) contains an interesting error. Boyle's Law may indeed have been "discovered deliberately" but not by Boyle. Boyle himself credited Richard Townley with it.[1]

It is both amusing and instructive to chase the incorrect labels of various items. For fun one could chase the originators of the "Faraday Ice Pail Experiment," the "Wheatstone Bridge" and many many more. In general one cannot trust *any* historical statement in a physics textbook, or often on monuments.

Reference

1. R. Boyle, *A defense of the Doctrine Touching the Spring and Weight of the Air* . . . London (1662); pages 60 and 63.

STANLEY E. BABB, JR.
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

THE AUTHOR COMMENTS: Should we call it "Townley's law" rather than "Boyle's law"? Once firmly applied a label is hard to remove or replace; and Stanley Babb's further remarks suggest that this is not the only instance when it is neither the one who first proposed it, nor the one who first tested it, but usually the man with the best public relations who wins out. I fully agree with his last sentence and feel that too many of us take the two lines from Goethe's "Faust" too seriously: "*Was man Schwarz auf Weiss besitzt/Kann*

letters

man getrost nach Hause tragen." It would be a monumental task, though, to find out unambiguously for every named law and effect who all precursors and/or collaborators were; where and when the law was first stated or published; and who started to call it by the given name.

H. K. SCHURMANN
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ads for filled positions

With the advent of affirmative action, there has been a remarkable increase in "help-wanted" advertisements by equal-opportunity employers for jobs that are already filled. I am personally acquainted with a number of cases where such advertisements are a subterfuge to justify hiring of a person already chosen long before placement of the ad. The advertisement is used to "show" that a fair search was made.

I resent writing letters of recommendation for people to schools that will never consider the candidate for a position anyway. I think the entire business has degenerated into a farce.

DONALD RAPP
The University of Texas
Dallas, Texas

Corrections

I would like to correct two errors in the June 1974 issue of PHYSICS TODAY in the APS news section on page 59. The APS Summer Study on Radiation Effects on Materials, which I organized, examined basic scientific problems that limit progress in energy applications and stressed those that can be attacked by physicists in universities. Industry and AEC labs are already heavily involved in the problems of the effects of radiation on materials. Also, the photograph shown is that of my brother, Richard W. Vook, Professor of Metallurgy, Syracuse University.

F. L. VOOK
Sandia Laboratories
Albuquerque, New Mexico

See photos below for correct identification of Vook and his brother—Editor □

RICHARD W. VOOK

FREDERICK L. VOOK