letters

The real world

I will add my "amen" to David Weinflash's "sermon"—"Advice to exphysicists on entering the real world" (5 March, page 9). He preaches the truth, and does it eloquently and succinctly, without one wasted word. My first thought was that every university physics department should prominently display this article, but that would be like Luther's theses.

Those of us employed in industrial laboratories can be fooled. Our surroundings look so much like the labs we knew in graduate school. Occasionally, techniques from out of our physics pasts seem to solve a technical problem, and we think we are about to show the world the splendors of physics. But then we hear the knock at the door. There stands the real world, the God of Expediency, saying, "Follow me; I will make you fishers of Mammon."

So, we lay down our equations, take up our balance sheets, and follow him. Only by cleansing our hearts of the evil thoughts of a life devoted to the search for natural truth can we truly listen to the world, and begin moving with it.

Nearer, my God, to Thee!

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The guest comment by David Weinflash must have struck a responsive chord in ex-physicists "ex-ed" by age, by competition with new blood, and so on, as well as by personal choice. My own vibrating chord was that things I thought should be done, weren't. This makes a brave new world harder to enter, and also suggests that this journal could serve an added function. Consistent with Einstein's terse dictum "Research is dialogue," both with Nature and with others of like interests, a column of letters describing special interests of a "Physics" nature or its application could help the formation of dialogue. This could be important if complementary specializations were joined. As one example, Chris Gregory has done amazing work in 5-dimensional math-physics. Working through his extension of Einstein–Infeld equations-of-motion results could be worthwhile. Again, some years ago I noticed that there really is an extremum in the safety and simplicity of the nuclear-reactor concept. But, no one wants to fund construction for any purpose, even for such natural uses as exploring the deep oceans. Again, as unlikely as it may seem to some, the claims that God really is very much alive seem to check out. This is a very active area. Again, the man who noticed that ion beams are better than radiation for C^{14} dating must have wanted advice on the art of ion-beam formation, and so on.

It is certainly true that the big labs have an advantage, but in new areas of work this may be more than balanced by the direction provided by Washington. This effect could be an answer to Tsang's question on innovation (March, page 11). A physicist is one who works on reality, preferably for tangible results but not only for financial ones. Those we admire have frequently found others to serve at least as a sounding board, and companions are helpful. My experience with making suggestions of interesting problems is that they are caught on the fly by editors and referees. But, one really shouldn't work alone, if somewhere other interested people exist.

In the same issue (page 114) it was suggested with some force by Morton and Judy Tavel that a body of experts should examine the energy problem and draw conclusions. They will, I trust, hear from some of the many people who have made just such studies in past decades, since a constructive letter should be answered. Those who have been active in applied physics have been most productive in making such surveys, since they know the difficulties better than any others. They have found that generally the less one knows about nuclear power the stronger is the anti-nuke stand.

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Russian boycott

I just read Herman Feshbach's editorial in March (page 160) addressing the question of a Russian boycott. I have the feeling that what he said was "Let's

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