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First, two pieces of good news about tritiated thymidine itself. Our prices are down. Quite substantially. Examples: 25 mc dropped from $600 to $400 (and no one has a lower one) and 5 mc will now run you $100 instead of $150 (and again, no one has a lower one.) Etcetera.

The second newsworthy fact re our tritiated thymidine: we have the widest range of specific activities available anywhere, from the lowest (0.36 c/mmole), to the highest (> 10 c/mmole), with three other levels in between.

Incidentally, new batches of tritiated thymidine fail to work their way into our inventory unless they have a minimum radiochemical purity of 99%. (What happens with the passage of time? Read on, we get to that provocative question somewhere below.) Now to tritiated thymidine’s interesting relatives.

As a most convenient mechanism for introducing radioactivity into cell DNA, tritiated thymidine obviously gets a great deal of attention. As a result, we tend to forget to tell you about the related compounds that we have (not just in our catalogs — in our stock) that you might wish to know about.

THYMIDINES (not tritiated) — We have two. Thymidine-2-C14 with these specific activities: 6-10 mc/mmole and 25 mc/mmole (new!). Also, a chromatographically homogeneous unlabeled thymidine.

THYMIDINE NUCLEOTIDES — A uniquely wide selection here. The thymidine 5'-phosphates-2-C14 are now in stock as the mono, di and triphosphates, while the tritiated thymidine 5'-phosphates are available in the mono and triphosphate form. The unlabeled thymidine 5'-monophosphate is yours as the monocalcium or disodium salt.

THYMIDINE'S PYRIMIDINE BASE — Thymine-H3, as with everything else in this recitation, is also in stock and immediately available.

TRITIATED THYMIDINE LITERATURE — We have assembled a packet of most useful information on tritiated thymidine. It contains: detailed, helpfully illustrated procedures for tritium autoradiography developed at Brookhaven (unpublished and not generally available elsewhere); specification sheets covering tritiated and unlabeled thymidine; and
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therefore important, even essential, that the public bring unremitting and strong counterpressure to bear. Let us hope the present bill will be aborted, but that pressure for a maximum flow of information will continue undiminished. Parenthetically, I understand that the bill currently undergoing committee hearings, apparently identical with Larrabee's citation, H.R. 5583, is numbered H.R. 5012.

Larrabee is apparently concerned primarily with the impact of the proposed bill on the scientific and technological community. This is natural, given the special audience for your journal. However, in considering questions like this one, is it not a little parochial to claim, even by implication, a special dispensation for the scientist and technologist? Granted there are some aspects of the general problem which are special to science and technology (Larrabee mentions a "right to publish"); these special aspects can be soundly dealt with only in the general context of access to federal records.

There is a voluminous literature on access to records. May I recommend a paper that provides some historical perspective: "Public records—who knows what they are?" by Oliver W. Holmes [Am. Archivist 23, 3 (1960)].

C. E. DEWING
1320 McCay Lane, McLean, Virginia

Grassland Fires

The recent report regarding grassland vegetation by Wells (9 Apr., p. 246) and the letter by Ehrenfried (28 May, p. 1173) stress the role of man as a cause of fires in the Great Plains region. As a range conservationist with several years of experience in western North and South Dakota, I have had the effectiveness of lightning in starting prairie fires amply demonstrated to me. On many occasions, during the late summer months, lightning started numerous fires over a wide area where I was responsible for fire control, and control measures were necessary to suppress them. On such occasions one could vividly picture the potential of such fires in a time when no fire control agencies existed. In that era such fire-retarding factors or conditions as roads, railways, plowed fields, residential areas, strip mines, and overgrazed rangelands would also have been absent. That man contributed (and continues to contribute) to the incidence of fires on the Great Plains cannot be denied, but the role of lightning should not be overlooked or slighted.

CARL-ERIC GRANFELT
Box 338, Whiteriver, Arizona

Aristogenes

In the 18 June issue of Science (p. 1579), two books were reviewed under the heading "Modifying man: Muller's eugenics and Lederberg's eugenics." Readers who find these books enjoyable or important may be interested to learn of a project which is being actively discussed in England and which in many ways may be expected to fit the English milieu particularly well. Briefly, it is proposed to have a bill laid before Parliament which would grant certain eugenical privileges to the aristocracy, of blood and mind. The peerage, including life peers, would under this scheme be allowed polygamous marriages, while knights would be asked to provide semen to a Bank of Superior Genotypes. Gradations of privilege may, under the proposal, be laid down in historical terms for peers, but for knights according to classifications such as the five classes of the Order of the British Empire. Women (married women, for the time being) will presumably be urged to use the Bank by drawing freely on the account of their choice. Like any human undertaking, the plan in question cannot be expected to appeal to everyone, perhaps not even to all eugenicists. Some no doubt will complain that not all peers or knights are sufficiently superior for the proposed honors. But that argument was conclusively squelched in a recent letter to the New Statesman which, referring to the bemedaled Beatles, said: "You see fit to condone publicly the award of an MBE to four boys who have given more pleasure to more people of all races than, perhaps, anyone ever before." That attitude has become widespread and will presumably give much support to the eugenic scheme, notably among women. Skeptics may wish to turn to an article "Eugenics and utopia" in the spring issue of Daedalus.

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