

letters to the editor

At the annual meeting of the Council of the American Meteorological Society in October, it was decided to initiate a "Letters to the Editor" column in the BULLETIN. As readers will know, letters have frequently appeared in the past under the heading "Correspondence." In the future, this title will be restricted to letters discussing a paper which has previously appeared, or shorter contributions. "Letters to the Editor" will include unsolicited comments from the members of the Society concerning problems of interest to the atmospheric sciences.—GEORGE S. BENTON, *President*

To the Editor:

I have recently had the opportunity to attend the GARP conference in Boulder, Colo., 15–17 October 1969 and found the program both stimulating and provocative. One of the more apparent limitations of such a meeting—although perhaps its ultimate purpose—is the restricted opportunity for comment by the scientific community at large, a condition imposed on the meeting by both time and attendance. As a consequence, I should like to recommend an open forum discussion of GARP in a "Letters to the Editor" format in the BULLETIN, and to that end submit this letter.

My comments shall be somewhat more philosophical than scientific; although I may have some personal reservations about the possibility of detailed long-range prediction as envisaged by GARP. I have complete confidence that the many qualified scientists energetically engaged in relevant scientific pursuits will, within a reasonable time, give satisfactory answers to nagging outstanding questions. I should rather prefer to address myself to the undercurrent of skepticism of GARP'S ultimate utility which I detected at the meeting.

I am somewhat dismayed at the lack of historical perspective on which this skepticism is based. The world's present state of technology is founded on centuries of effort by

dedicated men and women engaged in basic scientific exploration who had no possible knowledge of the future utility of their work. A pertinent example appropriate to our science which had its culmination in the Boulder GARP meeting has its roots in the mid-1940's. At that time no meteorologist had any indications of the impact of digital computers on weather forecasting. Yet today no area of meteorology is unaffected by the computer and qualitative forecasting of many scales of motion is a thing of the past.

We see therefore that the development of science carries with it the broadening capability for man to extend his influence over his environment. We must encourage the development of new knowledge and capacity; utilization will inevitably follow. One is tempted to quote the old adage "shoot for the moon," but that cliché has also fallen in the wake of man's quest for mastery over his environment. The question of relative priorities is clearly a problem with which the society (sponsors) must contend. Our effort as scientists should, however, be to encourage the expansion of knowledge in our field of endeavor, especially as it is manifest in the proposals of GARP.

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