matters arising

Evolution of the Tasman Sea

SIR,—Hayes and Ringis[1] have presented an interesting model for the evolution of the Tasman Sea. I wish to call attention, however, to what I feel is an inappropriate reference to an earlier article by myself and Brennan[2]. Hayes and Ringis[1] state that: "A cursory examination of widely spaced east-west aeromagnetic profiles between Australia and the Lord Howe Rise led to the early but incorrect conclusion that there were no lineated magnetic anomalies within the Tasman Sea." But in discussing the possibility of lineated anomalies in Tasman Sea we stated that: "While the lack of correlated north-south anomalies cannot be proved conclusively from our data, if such correlation does exist it is not apparent." Furthermore we said: "But the fact that the individually widely spaced magnetic profiles resemble magnetic profiles produced by the process of seafloor spreading means that the possibility that these magnetic anomalies were produced by an earlier episode of seafloor spreading cannot be excluded. This earlier period of seafloor spreading could have been complex, requiring a closely spaced survey to detect its presence." From our study we concluded that: "A more detailed survey should be conducted to resolve these two contradictory ideas (that is, lineated as compared with nonlineated anomalies) concerning the source of the anomalous magnetic pattern formed in the Tasman Sea."

Unfortunately, some confusion may result from the title given to our letter on the index page of the issue in which it appeared. It was referred to as: "No seafloor spreading in the Tasman Sea," perhaps an unfortunate summary in view of the above.

My present comment does not, of course, effect the substance of the Hayes and Ringis paper but merely seeks to clarify the interpretation of an earlier reference.

Yours faithfully,
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[1] Hayes, D. E., and Ringis, J., *Nature*, **243**, 454 (1973).
[2] Taylor, P. T., and Brennan, J. A., *Nature*, **224**, 1100 (1969).

science on television

Under the BBC's bushel

John Gribbin and Fiona Selkirk

IF you ask the average scientist in the street (let alone the apocryphal man on the Clapham omnibus) what science programmes are to be found on British television he would probably reply "Well, there's "Horizon", of course, and the Open University, and I think there was a programme about anorexia on ITV the other day, and sometimes odd bits late at night on BBC." In fact, those odd bits amount to regular broadcasts in 30 weeks of the year (excluding repeats) under the guise of further education. But the BBC in general, and *Radio Times* in particular, is so coy about this output that it is difficult to find what is on, and when, at the best of times. Recently, these programmes have suffered because of restrictions on late night television (in Britain that means after 2230) and because of the subsequent domination of our screens by election programmes; so these difficulties have been greatly enhanced. We therefore found it necessary to resort to a visit to the BBC Television Centre, where several hours spent in a viewing room provided the material needed to comment on this almost undercover output from the BBC.

Of the forthcoming attractions "The Experimenters", provisionally scheduled to be shown on BBC1 on Mondays from April 22, will probably be of considerable interest to a scientifically knowledgeable viewer.

It is seldom possible to combine scientific research with vocational work and the choice after graduation is a difficult one to make and even more difficult to go back on if the choice transpires to have been wrong. A doctor in a mining community in South Wales has, however, managed to do just this and plans to provide some useful information about the occurrence and development of gut cancer, while still practising medicine in the community. He is the 'experimenter' in one of these programmes. The series attempts, and if this example is representative, succeeds, in looking at the people behind scientific research, their methods and motives.

This doctor tried pure research and decided he wanted to know his 'guinea pigs' as people. He took up general practice and is starting a survey into gut cancer using his patients as the subjects.

The scene of his meeting with the local community in one of the local clubs—on Bingo night—is effective. The attentive, slightly worried faces of his audience are intriguing as he explains what he is trying to do. "Why is this survey being done here and not in London?" he was asked. With a wry smile, he explained about population stability and community spirit, features not exactly characteristic of the population of an average big city.

There are problems involved with doing this kind of research, the biggest being communication, but this doctor argued convincingly that the feedback from research improves his value as a general practitioner even if the research turns out not to be of any great significance in itself.

Even in the laboratory, however, the halcyon days of scientific breakthroughs being made by a lone researcher are gone and today scientists have to work in teams. The choice of team mates is critical or research can grind to a halt through personality differences, even though the minds behind those per-