



North American AstroPhysical Observatory (NAAPO)



Cosmic Search: Issue 10 (Volume 3 Number 2; Spring (Apr., May, June) 1981)

[Article in magazine started on page 12]

Letters:

By: Editors

Letters are always welcome but owing to the volume it is not possible to acknowledge all of them. Also due to space limitations we reserve the right where necessary to condense or edit the contents. Letters may be addressed to: Editorial Dept., **COSMIC SEARCH**, P.O. Box 293, Delaware, Ohio 43015.

In his recent **COSMIC SEARCH** article, **In Which Klingons Became Chimeras**, Frank Drake puts forward conclusive common-sense evidence that the United States will not embark on a program of interstellar colonization in the near future. Dr. Drake's further conclusion that there are no interstellar empires, far from demonstrating the fallacy of Star Trekitis, serves merely to demonstrate a sad case of Saganism, the condition wherein university professors and radio astronomers become convinced that the entire universe is populated by other university professors and radio astronomers.

If current human technology is the pinnacle [sic; "pinnacle" should be "pinnacle"] of possible technology; if no further basic scientific breakthroughs will ever be made anywhere in the universe, then Dr. Drake's conclusions are probably correct. However, even something as trivial as a good fusion reactor makes interstellar travel a reasonable, if somewhat expensive, long-term operation. There are several excellent, logical reasons for interstellar colonization (Klingon groups might go just to get away from other Klingons) and many irrational ones. If there are a large number of technical civilizations, the odds are that many of them will find such reasons persuasive. Far more reasonable explanations for the absence of aliens on Earth are that we aren't on good travel routes or that advancing technology so alters the nature of technical civilizations that empire building (if it occurs) is a short-lived phase (cosmically speaking). Dr. Drake's comments on radio and CETI bring to mind the nineteenth century astronomers who speculated that the reports of flashes observed on Mars might be explosions set off by an intelligent, advanced race trying to signal us. After all, what other method could an advanced technology use to communicate across interplanetary distances?

Tom Van Horne



The article "Why Is Scientific Writing Unintelligible?" in a recent COSMIC SEARCH reminds me of an allied question: Why are scientific books and magazines so expensive? There seem to be four basic reasons for this: (1) Low circulation. (2) Scientific and mathematics books are generally made to endure. Hence, they are usually hardbacks, printed on high-quality paper, which are costly. (3) The special symbols needed for physics, chemistry, astronomy, and math require high prices. (4) Since the text must be as free of mistakes and misprints as possible, exacting proof-reading is required.

John Fadum
Boca Raton, Florida



In COSMIC SEARCH (Serial no. 6) you solicit opinion regarding the "Flag of Earth". In my opinion it is an excellent idea; however, the moon is one-quarter earth's diameter. The flag shows it less than one-fifth.

Good luck with this wonderful magazine.

Jerry T. Searey
Las Vegas, Nevada

[HOME](#)