

Correspondence

Your opinions count! Send your letters to "Correspondence," ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. You can also submit letters by fax at 860-594-0259, or via e-mail to: qst@arrl.org. We read every letter received, but we can only publish a few each month. We reserve the right to edit your letter for clarity, and to fit the available page space. Of course, the publishers of *QST* assume no responsibility for statements made by correspondents.

POLITICAL HAMMING

◆ I commend George Shands, W9WUU, for his concern about conditions in Myanmar ("DXpeditions and American Principles: Must We Choose?", June, 1997, *QST*). But if we applied Mr Shands' human rights litmus test to the DXCC Countries List, it would shrink to half its present size, if not smaller!

As far as "American principles" are concerned, the US has given little more than lip service to human rights on many occasions. Discuss our "proud history" with African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, Laotians, Vietnamese, Kurds ... the list is appallingly long. I don't know where Mr Shands is reading his history, but he should try sources other than those that blindly portray the US as the "white knight" of virtue.

Oppressive nations need greater visibility on the world stage, not less. DXpeditions to countries such as Myanmar are not political stamps of approval. On the contrary, they serve to educate more people about the country. DXpedition activities help focus attention where it is needed. (Why do you think DXpeditions are not welcome in places such as North Korea?)

Finally, despite the pros and cons of the subject, I do not believe that *QST*, or any other ham publication, should be a forum for political discussions. Politics, religion and other controversial subjects have no place in Amateur Radio. This is a *hobby* and should remain so.—*Roman S. Makuch, N2UCK, West Hurley, New York*

SELLING HAM RADIO

◆ I read N3NL's list of reasons why he believes there is a decline in Amateur Radio activity ("Correspondence," June, 1997). I agree completely, although I think that the problem of the media hyping cellular telephones and the Internet at the expense of CW (item 7 in his list) is not stated correctly. It isn't that the media doesn't consider CW to be a modern mode of communication. They don't consider CW—or Amateur Radio—at all! Unless we "market" ourselves aggressively, we're invisible.

The media is busy promoting cellular telephones, computers and Internet services. And why not? Public enthusiasm is at an all time high and growing rapidly. Electronic retailers are practically giving away cellular phones. You can't buy or register a computer or modem without receiving trial-offer solicitations from Internet providers.

The ARRL, despite its best efforts, can't hope to match the promotional clout of the communication giants. Even if we could, what would we offer to a society based on instant gratification? People don't want to study for ham exams, or wait to be licensed, even if it takes only one week. They want access to the most popular "toys" and they want them *now*. They don't know or care about technological details. Cost is all that matters.

I am sorry to be negative about this subject, but I see no remedy for the situation. There will always be people who are interested in becoming hams, but as cellular telephones and the Internet become commonplace, that pool of motivated individuals decreases.

Sadly, the CW debate has only served to undermine the unity we'll need if we're to ultimately save the hobby. Hope remains, but only if we pull together and become better "salesmen" for Amateur Radio.—*Bob Wexelbaum, W2ILP, Commack, New York*

REACHING THE YOUNG AND OLD

◆ I'd like to suggest two approaches for recruiting more students and retirees—prime targets for our hobby.

We can reach the young by providing hands-on experiences in classrooms. As a former teacher of Industrial Arts Electronics in the New York City public school system, I know this can be done effectively. Our elementary school students were provided with in-class shortwave receivers. In conjunction with a "homebrewing" curriculum, these radios introduced them to the excitement of Amateur Radio while providing real-world applications of geography, social studies, mathematics, language arts, science and the industrial arts. The enthusiasm of both teachers and students was evident as they listened to commercial and amateur communications. Many students soon went on to earn their Technician and General licenses.

As for retirees, many of these individuals are seeking hobbies for intellectual stimulation. Amateur Radio is an excellent choice. So-called "retirement learning" facilities exist throughout the United States, and many would be interested in offering ham programs to their participants.

The key to exploiting both opportunities is *involvement*. Clubs and individuals need to contact local schools and retirement centers. Volunteer your time to teach classes or assist students. All it takes is a phone call or

letter to get the ball rolling. In other words, don't just sit there, *do something!*—*Harry Krane, N4RRR, Boynton Beach, Florida*

ARECIBO AND SETI

◆ The article by Bob Zimmerman, NP4B, "Broadbanding the Arecibo Dish" (June, 1997 *QST*) is a wonderful introduction to the world's greatest SETI antenna. There are, however, a couple of minor corrections, and one amplification, which I would like to make.

I was identified as the president of The SETI League. Actually, my title is executive director. The president of this membership-supported, nonprofit educational and scientific organization is its founder, Richard Factor, WA2IKL.

My calculation of 20,000 light years as the range of Arecibo talking to its cosmic twin was made *before* the upgrade. Today, the refurbished Arecibo could communicate with a similar facility over perhaps twice that distance. And if intelligible communication is not our goal, it could (if aimed in the right direction) *detect* a similar facility transmitting in the direction of Earth, from just about anywhere in the galaxy.

Not mentioned in the article, but certainly noteworthy, is that meaningful SETI contributions do *not* require antennas on the scale of Arecibo! Hams are now hard at work on a global SETI effort utilizing small (3 to 5 meter diameter) surplus satellite TV antennas. The SETI League now has 500 members (mostly hams) in 28 countries, and has started a coordinated search for intelligent signals that will ultimately grow to 5000 participating stations, and real-time full-sky coverage. To learn more about our grass-roots effort, check our Web site, <http://www.setileague.org/>, e-mail your postal address to join@setileague.org, or call our membership hotline at 800-TAU-SETI.—*H. Paul Shuch, N6TX, Executive Director, The SETI League, Inc.*

A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

◆ The codeless Technician program has been a successful failure. I call it a failure because many of these new operators have not stuck with the hobby. The once-active VHF repeaters have inexorably become stagnant from disuse. Clearly, VHF-only privileges have not provided sufficient motivation for new hams.

Many or most of the new hams have not joined our ARRL, and a disappointing num-