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# Letters to the Editor

## Call Me Irresponsible...

It is likely that Stuart Hastings speaks for a majority of the membership (in Letters to the Editor, April). You have underlined his point with your snotty caption heading his letter: "Doesn't Like Chaotic Behavior of the Dollar". Neither the behavior of the dollar nor the behavior of any theory involving dollars has anything to do with Hastings's protest. You evidently don't like to hear it. Here it is again:

**WHAT POSSIBLE POINT IS THERE TO THE DESIGN USING \$\$\$ SIGNS ON PAGE 229?**

The answer is none. Second question: Why is the design there? Answer: Because we have an irresponsible editor.

*John Isbell  
State University of New York  
at Buffalo*

(Received March 17, 1995)

P.S. Of course you are not going to print this; the most I can hope for is that you may read it. You are probably thinking, "What killjoys these guys are!" If so, you are wrong. I have been reproached by real killjoys for publishing papers under pseudonyms such as M. G. Stanley (from *Pirates of Penzance*) and H. C. Enos (a relative of Joyce's Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker). I have made joke citations of Marshall McLuhan in *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* and of John Barth in *J. Algebra*. What these things have in com-

mon is that they do not get in the reader's way. Can't you get your damned artists out of the way? (And stop insulting members who write in with serious complaints.)

*Donald Saari's Response:* It is Hastings's and Isbell's personal business whether they appreciate the editor's choice of graphics for the *Notices*. But I was surprised by their inability to see the relevance of tumbling dollar signs in reference to my (February) article. To remind you, I described how mathematics casts serious doubt on basic perceptions and assumptions about price dynamics. Indeed, we now know that even elementary models from a first course in economics can cause the price changes to exhibit any desired kind of chaos! So, by comparing the article with Hastings's and Isbell's complaints, I can only assume they are jesting! If not,... (The paper has an editorial error: the reference *Waverling Invisible Hand* remains in manuscript form.)

*Don Saari  
Northwestern University*

(Received April 9, 1995)

I must agree with Stuart Hastings (letter in the April edition) that the

new style of article design is disconcerting.

Take the article on Norbert Wiener in the April edition. It is nine pages long, and contains no less than six photographs of Wiener. On the four pages on which no photograph appears, there is a half-page header on the first, and the other three contain a central box with a quote from the text (the quote on p. 433 coming from p. 430, the quote on p. 436 from p. 431, the quote on p. 438 actually coming from that page).

The following article, "An Interview with Fred Wan", continues the execrable trend of excising boxes from the display and putting a quote from the article in them. It also contains two fairly unenlightening pictures—the crest of the NSF and a dollar bill made into a jigsaw puzzle.

Figures can be very valuable when they illustrate something that is easier to see than to read a description of—a good example is Figure 2 in the article "Geometric Tomography". But the belief that a page of text cannot remain unadorned, no matter how inane the image that breaks the text up may be, is best reserved for children's books.

*John E. McCarthy  
Young Foggy  
Washington University*

(Received March 27, 1995)

All mathematicians engaged in pointless basic research have surely taken heart in the latest issue of the *Notices*, where Fred Wan assures that our curiosity-driven labors may unwittingly find strategic vindication in the design of better soft drink containers. A sterner inspiration is found in the article about Norbert Weiner, who apparently relished the direct practical application of mathematics to the killing of humans, bearing moral responsibility all the while.

From now on, I shall wear a red, white and blue kerchief while toiling in the  $p$ -adic fields, to symbolize my hope of contributing to the glorious production of garbage and death.

Mark Reeder  
University of Oklahoma  
(Received March 27, 1995)

*Editor's Note:* Before they are sent to the printer, the Editor reviews the composition of articles, including the graphics, for relevance. The Editor is sympathetic to the view expressed above that graphics should enhance and not divert attention from the text, and will pay closer attention to the composition for this reason. The *Notices* is in an experimental stage, and—like all good periodicals—will probably always be experimenting. We appreciate and take seriously all criticisms, corrections, and suggestions. We wonder, however, at the origins and significance of the outrage expressed in some of these letters.

### Response to Blackburn

The British algebraist N. Blackburn has published a vigorous attack (*Notices*, v. 42, pp. 325–326) against a letter of which I was among the signers (*Notices*, v. 41, pp. 571–572, p. 1101). I do not have time to compose a full reply.

There is, however, one point on which I cannot be silent. He denounces us for protesting the reference (in a recent obituary in the *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematiker Vereinigung*) to the 1944 liberation of Strasbourg from the Nazis as an occupation (Besetzung) by Allied troops.

For a Frenchman of my generation it is very surprising to read what he says about the term “occupation”. According to him, “to demand the use of a word with emotive significance instead of ‘occupation’ is pure political correctness.” For us, most of the time of the war was “le temps de l’occupation”. It is true that “liberation” has also an emotive significance. However, speaking of the liberation of Strasbourg does not involve using a word with emotive significance instead of the word “occupation”, considered as factual and neutral.

To consider “occupation” of Strasbourg by the Allied forces as the right term has an emotional value, especially coming from a British citizen. In 1944 and 1945, British soldiers in France were regarded as liberators, not as occupying forces.

Jean-Pierre Kahane  
Université de Paris-Sud (Orsay)  
(Received March 27, 1995)

I just read the letter of Norman Blackburn (*Notices*, 42, no. 3, March 1995) replying to Kahane-Krickeberg-Lorch about Bieberbach. I would like to point out that Kahane-Krickeberg-Lorch were historically right in being incensed by the words “occupation of Strasbourg by Allied forces”.

In fact Strasbourg, a French city, was liberated on November 23, 1944, by Free French forces under General Leclerc (his famous “2<sup>e</sup>ème D. B.”, “2<sup>d</sup> Armoured Division”). The French administration was immediately reestablished. American forces (the 7th Army of General Patch) cooperated in this liberation and also later, in January 1945, and despite the early misgivings of General Eisenhower, in the defense of Strasbourg against German counter-attacks. This was a normal military cooperation between allied forces, but Strasbourg never was under “Allied rule”: General de Gaulle was adamant about it.

Pierre Samuel  
Université de Paris-Sud (Orsay)  
(Received March 27, 1995)

In his comments (*Notices*, 42, pp. 325–326) on the letter by Kahane, Lorch, and me (*Notices*, 41, pp. 571–572 and p. 1101) Norman Blackburn asserts that our letter was “...an...attack on the DMV...” and “...an example of...anti-German xenophobia...”. In fact, there was nothing of the sort in it. The content of the letter was summarized in its first sentence: it was a critique of the editorial policy of the *Jahresbericht* as observed with respect to a specific issue, viz. articles on Bieberbach, Strubecker, and Teichmueller. As a German and as a member of the DMV since 1950, I would certainly not have signed a letter attacking the DMV indiscriminately or inciting to anti-German xenophobia. We even pointed out the formal motion of the DMV at its meeting in September 1934 regretting Bieberbach’s abuse of the JDMV, which was a courageous action. One can of course judge the incriminated articles in various ways, and further discussion might be useful, but Blackburn’s polemic comments distort our letter more than they discuss it.

Klaus Krickeberg  
University of Paris V  
(Received March 29, 1995)

### Errata

Due to a typesetting production error, an incorrect e-mail address was given for Charles Yeomans of the Young Mathematicians Network on page 554 in the May issue of the *Notices*. The sentence should have read, “To become a member of the YMN, send e-mail to Charles Yeomans [cyeomans@ms.uky.edu](mailto:cyeomans@ms.uky.edu)”.

Anne Roberts, author of the article on pages 547–553 in the May issue of the *Notices* was incorrectly listed as associate professor of mathematics at the University of Utah. Her correct title is adjunct professor of mathematics. The *Notices* regrets these errors.