

Letters

Dear Who?

San Francisco

Gentlepersons:

I enjoy your magazine but the address label covers too much of the cover to get any effect from backing off or squinting at Professor Pierce's picture in 84 characters. Except for the low brow, it could just as well be me.

My calculator shows that your error re 1/273 gives a true repeating decimal — 0.003663002663, etc., while Feynman's 1/243 is imperfect (0.004115226337448559677081).

In response to the terminal question in your letters column (What is the proper salutation in this modern age?), the above is my suggestion for a modern salutation to be used by one who doesn't know you well enough to use "Dear Ed and Jacque."

JOHN DASHER

Thanks — and we're sorry those address labels got slapped right into John Pierce's face last month. Our mailing service is still arguing with the Post Office official who made them do it.

Caltech

How about "Dear Mr/s" as a salutation when you don't know the sex of the person, e.g., Lynn? The addressee can read it to suit the occasion: Mr., Mrs., Ms.

JOHANNA TALLMAN
Director of Libraries

Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir or Madam, as the case may be:

I too would like a copy of Feynman's article on cargo cult science, which you published a couple of years ago. The above salutation is in response to your query in the March-April issue.

EDWARD A. FINN '60, Deputy Director
Lunar and Planetary Programs, NASA

Books

RACISM AND EMPIRE: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910.

by Robert A. Huttenback
Cornell University Press\$17.50

Reviewed by Edwin S. Munger

Impeccable scholarship is often covered by the barnacles of pedantry, resulting in a book that is unreadable and unread. Here is a lucid exception. In examining Joseph Chamberlin's assertion that the British Empire "makes no distinction in favour of, or against any race or colour," the book informs and entertains.

Dr. Huttenback, who has spent his academic career at Caltech since taking his PhD in history at UCLA, has done research for this study over a period of years in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. The result is a fascinating, fair, and devastating refutation of Chamberlin's doctrine.

The author obviously relishes the tidbits of history that serve to garnish his imperial roast. Thus from New Zealand he quotes the *Otago Times* in 1871, which decried Chinese market gardeners as "Mongolian Filth": "We are free men, they are slaves! We are Christians, they are heathens! We are Britons, they are Mongolians!"

In Canada, the Victoria Trades and Labour Council contended that "the Hindoos by reason of their caste prejudices, peculiar religious convictions, loathsome habits and obnoxious manner of living, can never assimilate with white people or perform the duties of desirable citizens of this country." Nor were Indians more generously described in Natal, where in 1897 they were called "black vermin," and common phrases included: "A thing black and lean and a long way from clean," or "the Asian dirt to be heartily cursed."

Sexual fears and stereotypes were

common in the white colonies. The Canadians attempted to save white women from the allegedly vile and unspeakable habits of Chinese by prohibiting Asians from employing white girls. A communication from the Vancouver branch of the Trades and Labour Congress declared that the Chinese "are also adept druggists in their own way, and as servants they have ceaseless opportunities of adulterating food with drugs unknown to white men, thus placing the female members of the household at their disposal and unscrupulous will."

The result of all this denigration and of the widespread, if less pejoratively expressed, views by white colonists was the passage of various acts to exclude Asians from settlement. British Columbia and California followed similar paths. All kinds of tricks were employed, which included asking a ship officer of Austrian and Egyptian antecedents to take Greek dictation to prove that he was "civilized."

The author shows repeatedly that the authorities in London did try to secure an even break for non-white British subjects, but they were usually overridden by the local white settlers.

The situation hasn't changed all that much today, when we find successive British Prime Ministers all but impotent in seeking an end to the decade of independence in Ian Smith's Rhodesia. But whereas the British government is today equally as powerless as in the nineteenth century, it has not acquiesced and will not acquiesce to the continued domination of a white minority outnumbered by blacks probably thirty to one.

The book describes how Indians lost their jobs in Natal when they couldn't keep books, as required, in English. A few years ago this reviewer heard Indians in Mauritius justifying a bill designed to exclude Chinese from being bookkeepers by requiring them to know Tamil. Racism will never be a monopoly.

Professor Huttenback recognizes that it is often "much too easy to judge the past through the eyes of the present," and that "the British Empire