

### Bearing a grudge

Are Friends of the Earth, as reported in 'Climate Change Target' (*The Geographical Magazine*, May 1995), trying to mislead us?

That carbon dioxide emissions have fallen is a matter for congratulation and for those genuinely concerned, the means by which they have fallen is of less concern than that they have come down.

Readers in general and Friends of the Earth in particular need to be reminded that one of the principal reasons put forward when the Government levied VAT on domestic fuel was to do just that – to meet our international treaty obligations. It's a lovely example of action producing the right result – well done!

So no praise to Friends of the Earth for their apparently grudging remark: 'by default than design'; and condemnation for failing to get their facts right as the VAT on domestic fuel remains at 8 per cent; the second rise to 17.5 per cent was never introduced – remember?

John James

Tetbury, Gloucestershire

### Tidy trekkers

Chandra Tal, the lake mentioned in 'Quiet before the storm' (*The Geographical Magazine*, May 1995) is not actually in Spiti but Lahul.

The Spiti Valley starts as one crosses the Kunzum La on the Great Himalayan Divide. It has been on the ancient road from Ladakh, over the Barra Laccha La and onwards into India via the Kullu valley for many centuries, and on the tourist trekking circuit since the early 1970s. One would realistically expect to find tourist detritus there after 25 years

of tourism. It is fortunate there is not more. It is quite wrong to suggest that it is the opening up of Spiti that has produced the phenomenon, and is redolent of the 'how awful' school of journalism. *Emlyn Thomas Gwynedd, Wales*

### Wealth for all

I visited Spiti in 1992 and have spent many months in Ladakh and Zaskar researching their history and culture and travelling with local people.

Tourism may bring litter and insensitive social behaviour, but it is quite impossible to fence a part of the world off and preserve it like a theme park or a reservation for quaint, out of date natives. And it would be morally wrong to try.

The people of Spiti, like all people, want the best that modern life can give them. They no more desire to live in the old ways than Ms Keith-Krelik ('Quiet before the storm', *The Geographical Magazine*, May 1995) would like to live under a pretty but leaking thatch, fetch water from the well and bring up her children uneducated for want of schools.

Articles in *The Geographical Magazine* may help tourism lose its boorishness. But local people also need to become wealthier in their own right, whether from tourist or non-tourist activity, so that they can come to see that their traditional society is in no way inferior to that of the rich and sophisticated folks who visit them. Either way, sensible planning controls are essential, although the Himachal Pradesh government's record in this respect is lamentable. *NF Howard FRGS Birmingham*

## COMMENT

### Strange bedfellows: geography and psychology

Geography and psychology will never be the twins that geography and history arguably are (*The Geographical Magazine*, May 1995). But integrating ideas from both disciplines can produce interesting theories concerning the spatial and environmental actions that make up our everyday lives.

Geographical flirtations with psychology can be traced back to the early 20th century. But despite the groundbreaking work of geographers Lowenthal, White, Wright and Kirk who first experimented with ideas of choice and action in our environment, it was not until the late 1960s that geography's courtship of psychology began in earnest, with the rise of behavioural geography. But by the early 1980s it was deemed 'dead' or passé, having failed to become part of the geographic mainstream mainly because its critics claimed that it was mechanistic, dehumanising and ignored the broader social and cultural context in which decision-making operates.

At approximately the same time, psychologists began to take an interest in the environment and individuals' interaction with it, and by the mid-1970s the sub-discipline of environmental psychology was firmly established. While behavioural geography floundered in philosophical debate, environmental psychology has flourished. Lately, the remaining behaviourally orientated researchers have tried to forge stronger links with environmental psychology, and there are many examples of where such an integration could be of use in understanding the everyday lives of individuals. For example, by understanding how an individual thinks about an environment we can start to comprehend everyday decision-making events relating to consumer and travel behaviour. What routes do people take and why? What places form people's destinations? Why do some people get lost and yet others do not?

The integration of geographical and psychological theory may also explain other aspects of our lives. For example, it can be used to try to understand migration choices; help us comprehend and use maps; improve the spatial lives of people who are visually impaired; and understand why people live in areas of high environmental risk. Such knowledge has implications concerning the planning of the environment, and may provide us with clues of how to improve both the teaching of geographical and environmental concepts and the materials used in the teaching process.

For geographers to turn away from the interface with psychology now is to foreclose an opportunity for fostering important interdisciplinary links at a time when the importance of space in the social sciences is being acknowledged and there is an audience receptive to geographical ideas. As such, further collaboration between the disciplines should be encouraged, both within the school curriculum and in academia. □

*Robert Kitchen teaches geography at the University of Wales Swansea.*