

*Letters to the Editor*

reflected in the *Quarterly*. Do not succumb now to the over-enthusiastic mathematical inbreeding which sometimes appears so strongly amongst the teachers and the journals on this side of the water.

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REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> R. L. ACKOFF, (1961), *Progress in Operations Research*, Vol. 1.

FEEDBACK IN ACCIDENT CONTROL

WE WOULD like to thank Dr. Cownie and Professor Calderwood for replying to our detailed comments on their article. We feel, however, that they have not recognized important issues implicit in our questions. What is the observable evidence which relates their model to reality? What are the conclusions which allow us to test the model's validity?

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IT IS certainly true that unless some observable consequences can be deduced from our description of hazardous activities, our description is of no value. It is over-generous, however, to credit us with devising a model, whose responses can be compared with a real hazardous activity. All we have done is to argue that any model must be a closed-loop one in which the effects of any change in the properties of the activity are fed back to influence the decisions of people taking part in the activity. There can be no doubt that the distinction between an open- and closed-loop model is appreciated at the observational level; we therefore assume that Lowe and Woodcock are sceptical about the causal connexions shown in our block diagram. But surely these cannot be criticized on the ground that they are not subject to observational tests. The diagram is not meant to show *how* available decisions, motivating events and the probabilities relating them affect decision, but only that they do affect them, and this is readily subjected to observational test.

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