

PUBLIC HEALTH

Infantile Paralysis Cases Increase Due to Season

LAATEST reports received by the U.S. Public Health Service show a fresh increase in infantile paralysis cases, the total for the country reaching 142 during the week of August 1. The increase is chiefly due to sporadic cases in various parts of the country, rather than to an increase of the outbreak in the Southern states. These cases are seen as part of the usual seasonal rise and are not considered a result of the earlier outbreak in the South.

Of the Southern states chiefly affected, Tennessee had an increase, with 26 cases for the week, but Alabama, with 29, and Mississippi, with 5, showed decreases over the previous week. California reported 16 cases, Illinois 12 and New York 6, with from 3 to 6 each reported in Minnesota, North Dakota and Nebraska.

The picric acid-alum spray has been used widely, many laymen spraying their own noses and those of their friends and neighbors. No reports on its effectiveness are yet available at the headquarters of the U.S. Public Health Service, but it is expected that some months hence when the history of this epidemic is written, some conclusion can be drawn as to its effectiveness as a preventive measure.

Science News Letter, August 15, 1936

ENGINEERING

Telephones to "Translate" For Power Conference

THE CONTINENTAL European practice of holding conferences in several languages will be followed at the coming meeting of the Third World Power Conference to be held in Washington, D.C., September 7 to 12. Multiple telephone plugs will make the new departure in American science meetings possible.

The temporary seat of each delegate, foreign or American, will be provided with multiple holes into which a telephone plug can be inserted so that the delegate can hear an address, in any one of the official languages employed which he understands.

When a South American delegate, for example, is using Spanish for his address, the other delegates may plug in an interpreter reading his speech in French, German or in English.

The enormous task of translating and

printing the addresses of all scheduled speakers is now under way at the Conference headquarters. At the seat of every delegate will be copies of all addresses in one of the four languages which he can understand.

As a result, the actual conference time of the meeting will not be employed in listening to the prepared discourses of the scheduled speaking delegates but can be devoted to the much more important task of discussion.

Dr. William Durand, noted California scientist who has devoted his life to marine and aeronautical engineering and who will serve as Chairman of the Conference, will have little linguistic difficulty. Dr. Durand will present his address of welcome in four languages—French, English, German and Spanish.

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ENGINEERING

Air Conditioning Brings Increased Fire Hazards

DEVELOPMENTS in modern building construction and the ever present demand for greater comfort and luxury are bringing about conditions which tend to seriously increase fire and life hazards. Fast becoming an industry in itself, the spread of air-conditioning is creating a problem which renders fire-fighting operations extremely difficult.

Explaining how a fire may quickly gain headway in a building by means of the vertical shafts and connecting horizontal ducts of air-conditioning systems, George Booth, chief engineer of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, New York, pointed out to members of the International Fire Chiefs' Association that all agencies charged with the safeguarding of public safety must be constantly alert and informed about developments in air-conditioning and that they must see that all reasonable demands for fire prevention and protection be complied with.

New regulations about to be issued by the fire underwriters will require the installation of dampers at the top and bottom of vertical shafts in air-conditioning systems and also in horizontal ducts where these pass through fire partitions. These dampers must be so arranged that by means of a fusible link or other heat actuated device they will close automatically in case of a fire. The new regulations will also make provision that all air filters and linings in the ducts designed to combat vibration noise be of fireproof or fire resisting materials.

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IN SCIENCE

ASTRONOMY

Franklin Institute Aids Amateur Star Gazers

IT IS highly possible that Philadelphia may some day boast of an amateur astronomer discovering a new comet, star or nova, according to James Stokley, associate director of The Franklin Institute in charge of astronomy.

For the past few months Mr. Stokley has been welcoming many amateur astronomers to the Institute, where, under the supervision of expert amateur and professional students of the stars, they have been grinding telescope mirrors and building instruments with enthusiasm.

"The Institute," said Mr. Stokley, "has set aside a complete workshop for these amateurs where they may spend all the time they wish. Dozens of telescopes are now in the course of construction. Periodic visits to the Fels Planetarium and the fine public Observatory of the Institute serve to bring the average layman closer to the majesty of the heavens."

"Amateurs in astronomy," continued Mr. Stokley, "are contributing invaluable material toward the furtherance of this science and are also rendering much important aid and information to the professional. There is definite work to which thousands of amateurs contribute their observations. This is principally in keeping an almost continual watch over the variable stars which are always changing in brightness.

"The professional astronomer must necessarily confine his attention to certain particular phases of the science, but the amateur is better able to watch over broader areas, and thus, when anything unusual, like a new star or a comet occurs, he may notice it before the professional. Thus, Peltier has contributed five new comets and a new star in little more than ten years, and a few years ago a Japanese melon-patch worker in California found another comet. This requires a very thorough knowledge of the constellations, and the stars and other objects in them, so that anything strange may be recognized at once."

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E FIELDS

METEOROLOGY

Worst Drought in History, Weather Bureau Verdict

THE drought in the interior of the country this year is measurably more severe than any other of record in the climatological history of the country" is the basic conclusion of the weekly summary of crop reports issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau.

With four months of the growing season now over, the present plant growth period is the driest on record in eight interior states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. It is the second driest on record in Ohio, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Kansas and Montana.

The last crucial seven days, reports the Weather Bureau, showed a break in the severe July heat but no rain except locally through the Midwest. Throughout the corn belt the chief crop is bad and steadily deteriorating.

Cotton is generally favorable with the rains of the last week helping the southeastern section.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Garlic Breath Comes From Blood Via the Lungs

THE SCENT of garlic heavy on their breath, subway and surface car riders go their way, all unconscious of the scientific controversy being waged over them.

A short year ago, Dr. Howard W. Haggard and L. A. Greenberg of Yale University announced to a waiting, but not a breathless world, that garlic and onion odors issue not from the blood by way of the lungs, as had been previously held, but arise solely from particles of onion and garlic retained in the structures of the mouth.

All the garlic eater needed to do, said they, was to wash the mouth and tongue with chloramine, and presto, his breath was as sweet as new-mown hay.

Now come Drs. M. A. Blankenhorn and C. E. Richards of the department of internal medicine, University of Cincin-

nati, with three selected subjects who, they claim, disprove all that.

These men, from various causes, were no longer able to take food by mouth, but had to be fed through man-made openings in the body. Moreover, one of them could not exhale the breath through the mouth. Yet when fed the offending substance, the scent of garlic clung to them still, after from six to twelve hours.

Not content with this evidence, the Cincinnati doctors fed a salad containing garlic to three normal persons, and eighteen hours later they still smelled of it. Each then had his mouth washed out with chloramine, and there was no longer any smell of garlic—not for half an hour or so. After that the garlic odor was detected by all who sniffed the immediate air.

These four tests, says Cincinnati to Yale, prove that garlic and onion breath odors do come from the blood by way of the lungs. They further prove, it is charged, that chloramine merely masks the odor temporarily and does not cure it.

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MUSIC-PHYSICS

To Broadcast True A as Standard Musical Note

"SOUND your A"—the phrase so well known to musicians—will take on new significance on Aug. 29, when the National Bureau of Standards starts a two-week test broadcast of sending out continuously, night and day, the four hundred cycle note that is A on the piano.

The broadcast will be held at the request of musical organizations who feel that they need a really accurate and true-pitch A. Musical instrument makers, piano tuners and others who have need for an accurate standard of pitch are asked to write the radio section of the Bureau for further details and comment on the new service. Depending on the two weeks test, the Bureau may arrange for an extension of the musicians' service.

Only time, day or night, when the "A" will not be broadcast will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 3:30 p.m., E.S.T. While the older receiving sets may not pick up the signals, the newer sets and the "short wave" or "all wave" receivers will. Transmission will be on 5,000, 10,000 and 15,000 kilocycles per second.

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ASTRONOMY

New Comet Loses Tail Puzzling the Astronomers

DISAPPEARANCE of the tail of the Peltier comet now streaking across the southeast sky, as reported at the Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago, adds another mystery to the long history of comets.

The Peltier comet made its nearest approach to the earth Aug. 4, when it was only 16,000,000 miles away.

Biela's comet is perhaps the most famous of all comet mysteries. In 1846 it split into two parts and the two parts traveled side by side for some months. Returning in 1852, the two parts were separated by about 1,500,000 miles. But neither of them has ever been seen since then, although astronomers estimate that they must have returned to the region of the sun and earth at least ten times.

Holmes' comet of 1892 was large and bright when discovered in November of that year, but by December it had doubled its size and become almost transparent. Then in January it suddenly contracted again and showed a large nucleus.

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VITAL STATISTICS

Suicides on Decline During Past 6 Months

A NEW drop in the suicide death rate among insured wage-earners is in prospect for this year, if the better record of the first half of this year is maintained.

Figures compiled by Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. statisticians show that the suicide rate was 8.9 per 100,000 during the past six months. If this continues, it will mean a drop of one-sixth in the brief space of four years. In 1932, suicides reached the highest point recorded since 1915.

The fact that the increase in suicides reached its peak at the very height of the depression caused some speculation as to whether economic conditions influenced self-destruction. Dr. Louis I. Dublin, Metropolitan's statistician-vice-president, points out that it is equally significant that the suicide rate rose steadily in the feverishly prosperous years immediately preceding the depression. He concluded that neither upward nor downward trends in suicide result solely from economic causes.

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