

Do You Know?

Americans eat ten times as much *shrimp* as lobster.

Fall is the best time to turn over soil in the home garden.

Soot from wood contains carbon and some ammonia and, therefore, has value as a fertilizer.

Ammoniated mercury, in a cream, has been successfully used to make Negroes' skins several shades lighter.

The average gross value of *crops* grown in 1945 on lands under government-built irrigation projects was over \$100 an acre.

Highway *post offices* have been added to the U. S. postal system; they are motor vehicles, within which mail is sorted en route, that pick up and deliver sacks at local stationary post offices.

Oil of wormwood, distilled largely in southern Michigan from an herb, *Artemisia absinthium*, is a component of a flavoring agent used in alcoholic beverages of the vermouth type and in cordials.

The *wild duck* population of the United States has declined from approximately 125,000,000 in 1944 to some 80,000,000 this year due to drought conditions in the north central states and Canada, and overshooting in 1945.

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NUCLEAR PHYSICS

Neptunium 237 Fissions

This isotope of the recently discovered element will not make an atomic bomb, and only a small quantity is available for experimentation.

➤ A THIRD CHEMICAL element can be split asunder by slow neutrons and made to release atomic power, Prof. Glenn T. Seaborg of the University of California, codiscoverer of this chemical element as well as the atom-bomb's plutonium, has announced.

But the neptunium isotope 237 is still a scientific curiosity, manufactured as a plutonium byproduct with only a hundred milligrams (a mere three hundredths of an ounce) available for scientific studies.

Diplomats worrying about international control of the atomic bomb need not be concerned about this latest fissionable element. It can't be used in making atomic bombs.

It may eventually be used in atomic power production, but it can't be produced in a large quantity, as plutonium, or even uranium 235, the other two fissionable elements.

Neptunium 237 was originally discovered in 1942 by Dr. A. C. Wahl and

Dr. Seaborg, but that it would fission was not previously announced.

Existence of a second isotope 241 of plutonium was announced, the original variety being 239, used in the Nagasaki bomb.

Three new isotopes of neptunium were announced, numbers 234, 235 and 236. Two isotopes of curium, element 96 and present highest in atomic number, were announced, 240 and 242. All these have half-lives measured in hours, days or months.

But one previously known isotope 241 of americium, element 95, also manufactured by atomic transmutation, was found to have a half-life of 500 years.

The new neptunium isotopes were produced by bombardment of uranium with 22,000,000 electron volt deuterons (hearts of heavy hydrogen) and 44,000,000 electron volt alpha particles (hearts of helium) in the 225-ton cyclotron under direction of Dr. J. G. Hamilton.

Science News Letter, October 26, 1946

EDUCATION

Board Stresses Education In Agriculture for South

➤ EDUCATIONAL correctives for the "human erosion" that gnaws the folk of the South, as water and wind gnaw at her soil, is receiving major emphasis in the program of the Rockefeller General Education Board, Raymond B. Fosdick, its president, states in the Board's annual report.

Especial stress is being placed on the more practical phases of agricultural education, particularly on the rational utilization of land resources, and on soil preservation and rebuilding. Advantages of this training are offered to Negroes as well as to whites.

Mr. Fosdick adverts to the oft-cited low expenditures for education in the South—less than half of what it is in many northern states. "It is not well known, however," he points out, that most southern states are spending a larger percentage of their income on education than is expended by many of the wealthier states of the North, West and Middle West."

Science News Letter, October 26, 1946

Lactic acid, widely used in industry, can be made cheaply by a new process from sulfate liquor, a pulp mill waste.



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