

## PUBLIC HEALTH

# Criticize Cosmetics Ads

► COSMETICS are not all they are claimed to be, especially when advertised as skin foods, rejuvenators or tonics, Dr. Arnold J. Lehman, chief of the division of pharmacology, Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C., reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (May 25).

The increasing demand for cosmetics has led to new uses for substances already known as well as the development of synthetic compounds. But, unfortunately, carefully controlled research on these drugs has not kept pace with the claims made about them, Dr. Lehman reports.

Claims that a preparation can reduce skin dryness or hide skin blemishes and wrinkles are not objectionable, he said.

In recent years, however, the trend has been to advertise such products as being more than just cosmetics. In addition to the skin foods and tonics, some preparations are advertised as "contour creams" for bust development or bust reducing, wrinkle eradicators, and "deep pore" cleansers. There has been no conclusive evidence supporting many of these claims.

"For example, there is nothing known to science that will restore color to hair or cure early male baldness," the FDA official says.

More trouble comes from the recent use of such active substances as vitamins and hormones in cosmetics. Advertisers do not actually say the preparation has therapeutic value, but they subtly hint at it.

Vitamin A supposedly improves the ap-

pearance of the skin but there are no well-substantiated scientific tests proving cosmetics containing the vitamin are better than those without it.

But whether or not the vitamins, hormones, or other additives are of any real value is only part of the problem.

There is also the question of safety, and of what potential harm may follow the indiscriminate use of them in cosmetics, Dr. Lehman reports.

He concludes by strongly urging more intensive studies be made of the fundamental properties of the skin and what agents are toxic to it.

Science News Letter, June 8, 1957

## VITAL STATISTICS

## Baby Boom Surprises Population Experts

► THE BABY boom that began swelling the U. S. population at the end of World War II is still going strong, much to the surprise of population experts who had predicted it would be a temporary trend, the Population Reference Bureau, Inc., reports in its *Population Bulletin* (May).

The postwar baby boom was expected because of the marriages and births postponed during the depression and war years, but after this catching-up period the birth rate was supposed to drop again to its prewar level. It has not, according to the report, and in 1955 the U. S. birth rate was still 32% higher than during the 1935-39 period.

American families have begun to grow larger, with medium-sized families of two to four children becoming a clear trend. Today there are fewer no-child and one-child families than there were during pre-war years.

Whether or not more babies mean more prosperity is a many-sided question. Some believe there are already too many people in the country and many of our non-renewable resources have either been exhausted or reduced to the danger point.

On the other hand, some economists and businessmen believe our present national prosperity is due in a large measure, if not completely, to our rapid population growth after the war.

This idea of expansion was good and vitally necessary when the country was young and not completely settled, the Bureau reports.

However, now the U. S. has changed from a farming to an industrial nation, the old idea "more babies mean more business" does not hold up.

Production depends on three things: capital, resources and labor. With an increasing population, the labor requirement is assured, but an overabundance of labor cannot make up for dwindling capital and resources. If the baby boom continues, says the Bureau, it will eventually lower the level of living.

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## PHYSIOLOGY

## Lampreys Fattened For Hearing Research

► SEA LAMPREYS are being fattened in a huge fish bowl for research in diseases of the inner ear, Dr. Merle Lawrence, professor of physiological acoustics at the University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, reported.

The lamprey, a hated killer of game fish in the Great Lakes, has a primitive type of inner ear quite different than that of humans. The inner ear cells, however, are quite similar. The lamprey's main advantage for research is that its inner ear is easily reached.

All other creatures, humans and animals, have a bony protection of skull around the inner ear which makes them difficult to study.

"There are certain diseases of the inner ear, involving acoustic trauma, about which we know very little. In order to obtain the type of information we are seeking, we have to dissect the inner ear of a living creature. We then observe and make electrical response readings to gather data," Dr. Lawrence explained.

The sensory cells in the lamprey's inner ear will be tested to find out what kind of toxic conditions affect hearing, including noise, vibration, shock and other factors.

The lamprey must be heavily anesthetized for the work; otherwise it gives off an electrical field when breathing which upsets the delicate electrical recording device used to study the ear.

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**HEART SPRING**—These before and after X-rays show how the heart condition of Mrs. Mabel Streeter was improved by the insertion of a specially designed watch spring in her mitral valve. The picture on the left shows the enlarged heart. Nine and a half months later the heart size is almost normal. Doctors at Wayne State University, Detroit, expect the unbreakable watch spring, made of Elgiloy, to stay in Mrs. Streeter's heart for the rest of her life. Development of the spring for use in the human heart was the result of several years of study by a research team of doctors and technicians at Elgin National Watch Company, Elgin, Ill.