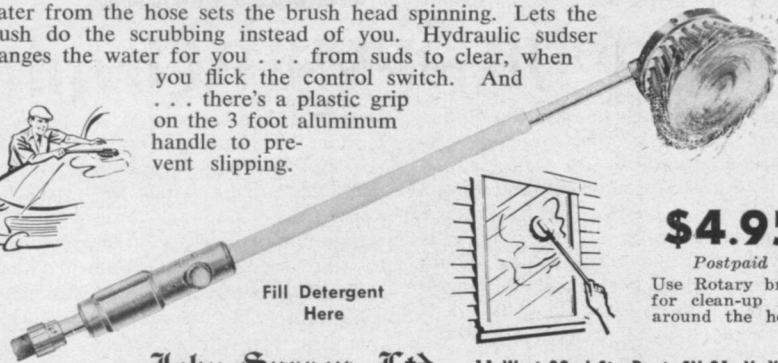


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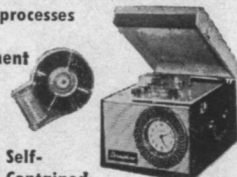
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PUBLIC HEALTH

Bombs Put Carbon-14 in Air Faster Than Nature

MAN'S NUCLEAR bombs have produced radioactive carbon-14 in the earth's atmosphere 15 times faster than nature during the past four years.

This radioactive carbon becomes a part of the human body about a year after it enters the atmosphere for persons living in the United States. Radiocarbon-14 has been indicted by Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Linus Pauling of California Institute of Technology and other scientists as considerably more dangerous to humans, genetically, than radioactive strontium-90.

Four scientists from Columbia University's Lamont Geological Observatory report on their survey of bomb-produced radiocarbon in two related articles in *Science* (Aug. 7).

Neutrons released during nuclear tests react with nitrogen to give "man-made" carbon-14 as part of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Dr. Wallace S. Broecker and his associates measured the bomb-produced radiocarbon in the oceans and the human body as well as in the air.

They found that the carbon-14 concentration in the lower part of the atmosphere increased about five percent each year between March, 1955, and March, 1958. Mixing of air between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres is so rapid that it is complete within two years.

Only about 10% of the radiocarbon-14 produced up to March, 1958, had entered the oceans. When this radioactive material becomes completely and evenly distributed throughout the atmosphere and the oceans, the amount in the air will be between one-quarter and about one and a half percent higher than in the prebomb days. This added amount will then gradually decrease, half of it being eliminated in 5,600 years.

Dr. Arthur Schulert and Edwin A. Olson of Lamont Observatory, and Dr. Alan Walton, now at the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, England, cooperated with Dr. Broecker in the survey.

Science News Letter, August 22, 1959

Questions

BIOLOGY—What would be one practical application of the plant serum reported by Yugoslav research? p. 117.

ENTOMOLOGY—Where is the autumn fly posing the most serious problem? p. 120.

PEDIATRICS—What are some of the symptoms of drug addiction in infants? p. 116.

PSYCHOLOGY—How can your skin be used to indicate emotional response? p. 115.

Photographs: Cover, Republic Aviation Corporation; p. 115, Radio Corporation of America; p. 117, Boeing Airplane Company; p. 118, Arthur D. Little, Inc.; p. 119, Convair Division-General Dynamics Corporation; p. 128, Vernon Pope.