

delicate enough to measure just what the forces are.

The device has been installed on the center pier of a bridge over the Athabasca River 100 miles north of Edmonton. Ice measurements are being taken now that the river ice has broken up. Designers hope to determine if building codes that call for bridge piers to resist 29 tons of force per square foot are reasonable. If it can be confirmed that ice forces are substantially less considerable cost savings could be achieved in the construction of bridges in Canada and other northern countries.

FROM BRITAIN

Neurotics Assessed

Neurotic illnesses result in the loss of 17 million working days a year in England and Wales—yet only one in three of the people involved has ever been seen by a psychiatrist.

The Mental Health Research Fund has now allocated its biggest grant—nearly \$100,000—for a research team to inquire into the problem of neuroticism. The team, already at work in a London borough, is headed by Dr. Brian Cooper of the London University Institute of Psychiatry.

The neurotic individual, quite apart from his psychological problem, is more frequently physically ill than the average man, and the same is true of his family. The initial aim of the research program is to look closely into the social and medical needs of people who suffer from neurotic and psychosomatic illnesses.

In order to assess the problems of the general practitioner in relation to these illnesses, the team psychiatrists will interview patients in the doctors' office. Patients will also be visited at home by the psychiatric social worker.

In this way it should be possible to estimate what percentage of psychologically-ill patients are in need of direct psychiatric treatment, and also to learn how many would benefit from the advice and support of a social worker or social agency.

FROM MEXICO

250 Species Doomed

At least 250 species of animal and bird life are condemned to extinction in Mexico and Central America.

Philip K. Crowe, former United States Ambassador to Uruguay, Peru and Brazil, recently completed a several-month study trip sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund. He talked with presidents of the five Central American republics as well as Mexi-

can officials, to exchange ideas on conservation of flora and fauna.

Among species apparently doomed, Crowe found, are the tapir, the blue whale, the eagle and the spotted bear.

He says drastic enforcement of bans on hunting of declining species, and setting up of wildlife sanctuaries are urgently needed.

Most frequent response by Central American authorities, is that they lack financing and personnel to enforce conservation measures.

FROM AUSTRIA

Atom Wastes

Careful handling of atomic wastes could not only avoid pollution of land, seas and skies but yield valuable new industrial and medical products.

Dr. L. H. Keher of Australia's Atomic Energy Commission and former chief of the Health, Safety and Waste Disposal Division of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna calls for a storage policy rather than disposal.

He singles out the gas xenon, whose present commercial use is primarily in the lighting industry. Its possible applications in medicine, particularly for anesthetics, and in practical chemistry, remain unexplored.

Scientists have recently discovered the reactive behavior of this element, once a "rare gas." It is produced by nuclear fission in quantity sufficient for commercialization.

Xenon is still expensive at \$5 per gram, mostly provided by the liquid air industry. But the nuclear power industry will increase the supply to about 35 tons annually by 1980, thereby lowering the price, he predicts.

Dr. Keher recommends that industry scientists study how to recover stable isotopes formed from decay. "Isotopes must first be considered to have valuable uses," he says. "Therefore they should be stored as liquid, without adding materials that could make the later recovery of certain precious elements difficult."

FROM AUSTRALIA

Breeding Dibblers

The Western Australian Museum has sent three dibblers, one male and two female, to La Trobe University, Melbourne, to see if the small marsupials can be bred in captivity.

A museum spokesman said that since the report of the re-discovery of the rare dibblers last month, many people had written describing small marsupials they thought were dibblers. He said they were more probably short-nosed bandicoots.

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