

to the editor

Nitrate in cigarettes

Sir:

"Effects of Nitrate in Cigarettes" (SN: 7/13, p. 36) mentions a hitherto unmentioned hazard of cigarette smoking, namely the fire hazard of sodium nitrate as an additive.

Additives such as sodium nitrate, by insuring enhanced combustion, and sure, continued burning, whether a cigarette is puffed or not, are largely responsible for the well-known hazards of cigarettes. Cigarette smokers know how difficult it is to snuff out a discarded stub, even with under-heel efforts. Put a lighted cigarette in an ash-tray and it will burn rapidly even without the added oxygen supply provided by puffing.

Contrarywise, cigars and pipes require somewhat constant puffing to maintain combustion, so they present much less fire hazard. Even roll-your-own cigarettes refuse to stay lit when not puffed.

Until I read your report, I only suspected that packaged cigarettes contained some sort of sure-burning additive. I think the sodium nitrate additive is used to increase sales by making cigarettes easier to smoke without having to relight, and not for health reasons. I think by using sodium nitrate, cigarette manufacturers are callously disregarding the great loss of property, forests, and even life itself, for bed smokers, caused by cigarettes.

Congress should outlaw such additives for this reason, as well as for the biochemical hazards mentioned in your report.

*Benjamin F. Miessner
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A moral issue

Sir:

I have read with interest the discussion between Dr. Paul Ramsey and Dr. Bent Böving (SN: 9/14, p. 254) regarding possibilities of defining the beginnings of human life. Such discussions can, in my opinion, only be beneficial.

I do have certain misgivings about Dr. Böving's statement that "contraception . . . promotes their most probable natural fate, which is to perish," referring here to the sperm and the ovum. While in factual agreement with the statement, I would like to express the opinion that one should not assume on

(see Letters p. 306)

GO NATIVE



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28 september 1968/vol. 94/science news/305