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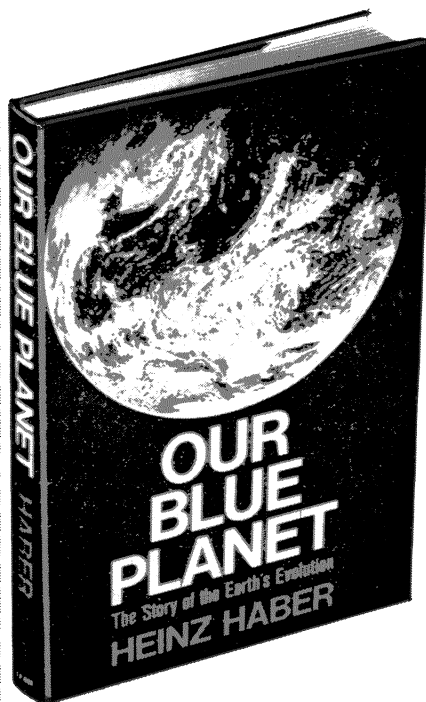
—JOHN W. GARDNER

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LETTERS

to the editor

**Early on Cyclamates**

Just a line to say how much I get out of your magazine. It was within its pages, months ago (SN: 12/7/68, p. 571), that I read of the possible harm from cyclamates—and it just now broke in the newspapers.

D. P. Kochendorfer  
Dayton, Ohio

**Too soft on FDA**

The article, "Salting the pure food mine," pertaining to the FDA and their position paper on MSG (SN: 10/4, p. 295) was accurate and to the point. I might comment that you were actually lenient with the FDA in your analysis of their position paper because, in fact, they misrepresented a lot more than you mentioned. Perhaps the most important observation is not that they made a couple of errors or even that they told a few bold-faced lies, but rather that every one of the numerous distortions and misrepresentations in their paper was slanted in the same direction, which suggests that those who drafted that paper were not only unconscionably careless with facts, but that they also must have had an ax to grind. Commissioner Ley, of course, did not write that paper, but he must assume responsibility for the bungling bureaucratic whitewash experts who did. The relevant question to press him into answering before letting the agency off the hook is how a consumer protection agency could possibly become so thoroughly turned around as to end up, in effect, defending industry at the expense of infant health.

Unfortunately, the FDA has continued, even under pressure, to show minimal concern over industry's indiscriminate use of MSG in baby foods. I have demonstrated that MSG in low oral doses, given by feeding tube to infant mice, produces brain damage. The FDA has been aware of these data for several months, but hasn't undertaken to replicate my studies as far as I know. It would be entirely possible for them to do the appropriate studies to confirm my findings in less than one month, but they would then have to admit that the practice of adding MSG to baby foods is in violation of all sound principles of toxicology. They would also have to remove MSG from the GRAS (Generally Regarded As Safe) list and ban it from baby foods, which would cost the baby-food companies some money and make the manufacturers of MSG uncomfortable for fear its use in

adult-food preparations would also come under regulation.

One individual working in the Bureau of Sciences told me that the cyclamate issue has been so demanding of time that they have simply not been able to get to the necessary work on glutamate. If this is the case, now that cyclamates are banned, perhaps glutamate can receive its due share of attention.

*John W. Olney, M.D.  
Department of Psychiatry  
Washington University  
St. Louis, Mo.*

### Tunnel vision

The tunnel vision of Dr. Wayland J. Hayes Jr., "DDT—Fears Out of Balance" (SN: 10/25, p. 376) is exactly the kind of thinking that has precipitated and is prolonging the world's environmental crisis.

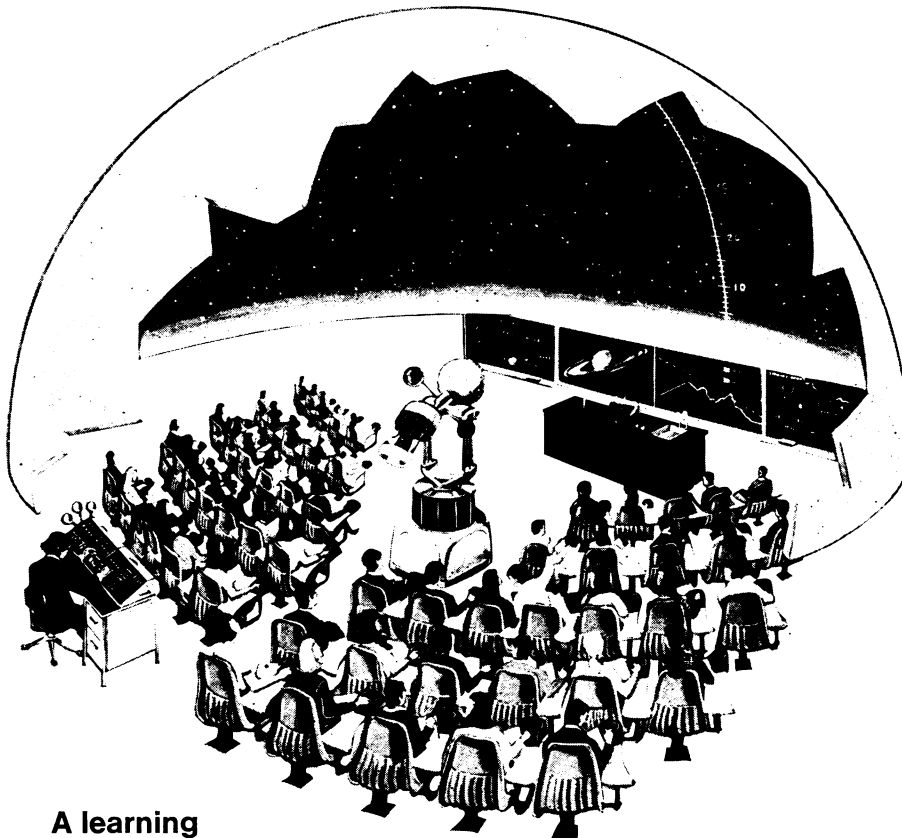
According to Dr. Hayes, the chances of injury to the general population through repeated absorption of small amounts of DDT are statistically negligible. Why, then, has the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently issued a new booklet for sportsmen and homemakers giving recipes for reducing the amount of DDT in fish for the family table? Why has the U.S. Government confiscated shipments of DDT-infested coho salmon from Lake Michigan that were bound for markets?

We know relatively little about DDT and its effects, but we do know that it persists for a long time and that it concentrates itself in the fatty tissues of organisms relatively high up the food chain. We know that DDT affects the fertility of lower organisms, that its shell-softening ability is lethal to the eggs of birds, that even in extremely weak concentrations it kills crab larvae. There is apparently a fair amount of evidence that it causes cancer in human beings.

But Dr. Hayes is probably inadvertently right about the minimal danger of a worldwide epidemic of DDT poisoning in human beings. Before we are able to concentrate enough in our tissues we may have destroyed the food- and oxygen-producing abilities of the world's oceans. And if that happens, there won't be much of a general populace left to worry about DDT poisoning. But I must insist that there is a better than negligible chance of general injury to the human population so long as the present use of DDT and the other hard pesticides continues, even if we are getting only trace amounts in our food.

*Gary A. Soucie, Executive Director  
Friends of the Earth  
New York, N.Y.*

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