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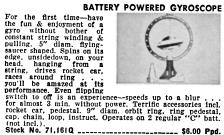
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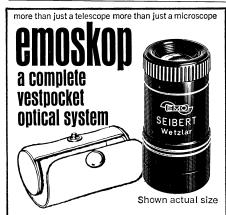
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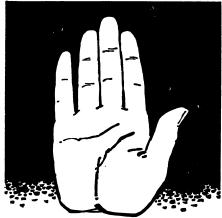


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SCIENCE NEWSBRIEFS

Mercury pollution

Federal agencies in the United States were not aware of the threat of mercury pollution in lakes and streams until earlier this year when Canadians discovered levels in fish from Lake St. Clair exceeding Public Health Service limits (SN: 4/18, p. 97).

The discovery touched off a nationwide effort by the Federal Water Quality Administration to identify mercury pollution where it existed. The result, released this week: Mercury pollution has been found to be a widespread problem, occurring in locations all over the eastern two-thirds of the country.

The FWQA is asking industries voluntarily to abate their mercury pollution. If they fail, says Murray Stein, FWQA enforcement chief, he will launch legal

Inflatable cushions

The auto industry has asked the Department of Transportation to delay the mandatory requirement of inflatable safety cushions (SN: 3/27/69, p. 198), scheduled for 1973. The automakers feel that there are too many unresolved technical and legal questions. Some problems cited: ear damage from the loud detonation that inflates the bag, product reliability and subsequent legal responsibility, and the retrofitting of older cars.

The National Highway Safety Bureau will give its answer when it announces the required specifications for the bag sometime before the end of the vear.

Legal abortions

New York's abortion law, the most liberal in the United States, went into effect July 1. The new law allows abortions for married and unmarried women age 17 and above, although the operation may be performed on younger women with the discretion of the physician. New York residency requirements apply only in municipal hospitals.

During the first week that the law was in force 142 abortions were performed in New York City's municipal hospitals. More than 1,700 patients have applied for the operation in the city's municipal hospitals.

Funds for NSF

A conference committee is currently seeking a compromise between the \$527.6 million authorized by the House for the National Science Foundation and last week's Senate authorization of \$550 million.

The House has already appropriated \$497 million, including \$13 million for the Sea Grant Program, for NSF. The Senate, this week, appropriated \$522 million.

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