

science news[®]

A Science Service Publication
Vol. 102/Sept. 23, 1972/No. 13
Incorporating Science News Letter

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Cover: The drugs-from-the-sea rush of five years ago has diminished to a ripple, yet marine biologists are still convinced that the ocean has great pharmaceutical potential. See p. 204. (Photo, of sponge that contains antibiotic activity, courtesy Osborn Laboratories of Marine Sciences)

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Advertising	Scherago Associates, Inc.
	11 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036
	Fred W. Dieffenbach Sales Director

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street
Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$10; 2 yrs., \$18; 3 yrs., \$25. (Add \$2 a year for Canada and Mexico, \$3 for all other countries.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be addressed. Include zip code.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Established as Science News Letter® in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices.

Published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255). Cable: SCIENSERV.

september 23, 1972

to the editor

Leave Alaskan oil there

Twisting what Rosamond's letter quotes a Houston oilman as saying about the Alaska pipeline (SN: 9/2/72, p. 146), I would put it: "Every pipeline built is added severity to the world's future petroleum crisis." The petroleum crisis I envision isn't the same as the energy crisis at all. It is easier to find substitutes for oil as an energy source than as a raw material for chemicals. If we inhabitants of spaceship earth are now so near the end of our reserves of oil that we think we have to bring it from Alaska, it's high time we quit squandering the last of it by burning it up. Let's just leave that Alaskan oil where it is. Our successors will need it for chemicals much more than we need it for the energy required to produce the superfluity of goods and services for which it takes advertising costing literally billions of dollars a year to stimulate the demand.

Richard L. Burling
Department of Physics
Central State University
Wilberforce, Ohio

Regarding previous letters on the Alaska pipeline: The head of California Institute of Technology's Environmental Laboratory, Lester Lees, recently made some interesting predictions concerning United States' fuel and energy shortage situation. As reported by Petroleum Information's publication: "He predicted as 'musts' for the future . . . smaller cars, costlier fuels, development of solar power . . . an embargo on gas hookups for homes, a reduction in the rate of commercial construction and the building of whole new cities designed to conserve energy. He forecasts cities designed mainly to save energy within 25 to 30 years in which residents will live close enough to work to ride bicycles. Cars in use would be small, lights would be fluorescent and minibuses would abound."

Until we get our energy system overhauled, and the quicker we start running to keep up with energy needs, the fewer blackouts and embargoes will be required. We need all the energy in usable form that we can get as soon as we can get it.

Merrill T. Endicott
Crude Oil Department
Gulf Oil Co.—U.S.
Houston, Tex.

Beyond the buffalo

I should like to thank you on behalf of the scientific community for informing us of the potential wrong that could possibly occur due to ignorance. The buffalo are not the only animals that carry *Brucella abortus* (SN: 9/2/72, p. 158); it can also be found in goats, sheep, horses, mules, deer, dogs, rabbits, chickens—in addition to cattle and swine, the main reservoir of the bacterium, according to the Center for Disease Control. According to a 1969 report of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, many producers of swine do not consider the disease a problem and therefore lack enthusiasm for eradication, and many states and swine herdsman have not made active commitments to the eradication of brucellosis in swine. Source: JOURNAL OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES, vol. 125, p. 289-94.

Robert C. Belile
Sulphur, La.

Excellent reporting

Your article on the work of Fieve and Fleiss of the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Mendlewicz of the University of Brussels on transmission of manic-depressive illness (SN: 8/26/72, p. 134) is concise and accurate, far more so than similar articles appearing in news magazines and newspapers recently. It correctly credits the researchers and the institutions involved, which the other articles did not. Congratulations on your excellent reporting.

Gordon L. Barclay, Ed.D.
State of New York
Department of Mental Hygiene
Albany, N.Y.

A ploy on metrication

It goes without saying that a certain amount of human inertia must be overcome in order to implement the metric system on a national scale. But what troubles me most are the dubious virtues of making its acceptance arbitrary (SN: 8/26/72, p. 132). This strikes me as the ploy of a gutless Congress trying to sneak the matter unnoticed in the back door so as to avoid the jeers of industry and the general public. I wonder if the option will still exist after the elections?

Fred R. Monaco
Dillon, Colo.

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