

Ford Motor Co. President Lee A. Iacocca told an environmentalist meeting in New York that rigid enforcement of the standards could cause "a complete shutdown of the U.S. auto industry." He called for a year's postponement of the 1975 regulations and a period of feasibility testing of new antipollutant systems in California before requiring nationwide implementation. The automobile industry, he said, "has been backed to the cliff edge of desperation."

Much of the controversy centers over the choice of device used to control emissions. So far, most automakers have chosen the "dual-catalyst system," which eliminates pollutants through catalytic reaction after the gas has already burned in the cylinder. The NAS committee found this method "the most disadvantageous with respect to first cost, fuel economy, maintainability and durability."

In its place, the committee recommended intensive evaluation of an unconventional motor developed in Japan, called the "dual-carbureted stratified-charge engine." In this engine components of gasoline are separated before entering the cylinder to promote more efficient burning with less pollution. American auto manufacturers counter that the engine has not yet been proven in large cars and that the switchover would involve costly retooling.

The committee and the auto manufacturers do agree on one point, however: that the original standards of the 1970 law should be reviewed in light of new knowledge and technological developments. Nevertheless, the committee scored the industry for not doing enough development in this area until pressured by the Government. "A relatively modest investment," they concluded, "could have precluded the crisis that now prevails in the industry and in the nation."

The Environmental Protection Agency is already under court order to hold a series of hearings to review the standards and the dates set for their implementation. The order, issued Feb. 10, resulted from a suit brought by auto manufacturers against the agency in response to a denial for extension of the deadline by agency Administrator William Ruckelshaus. New hearings are expected to begin in mid-March. □

L.B.J. Space Center

From now on, the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston will be known as the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center. Texas Democrats Olin F. Teague and Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. introduced the name-change bill in the House and Senate, respectively. It passed on voice votes Feb. 6 and 7 and was signed by President Nixon this week. □

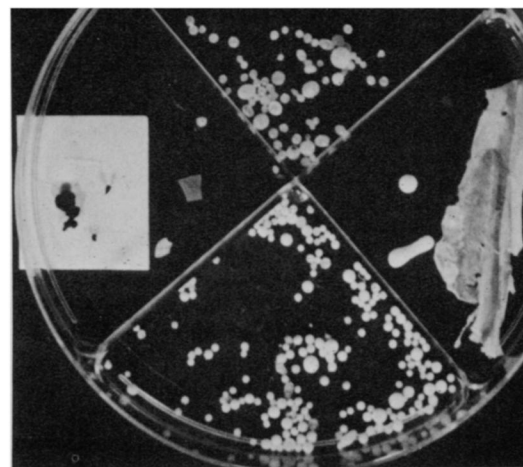
Oily seas and plastic waters of the Atlantic

Like a great highway befouled with the debris of civilization, the North Atlantic is becoming littered with floating plastic and smeared with tar.

Along a swath of open sea, stretching from the Caribbean to Cape Cod, scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have found massive amounts of floating bunker oil globules and 12 kinds of plastic, while conducting the first large-scale study of ocean-borne refuse. Having started out to assess distribution of fish eggs and larvae, the scientists soon found their research nets mired with tar balls and collecting bits of plastic ranging from minute polystyrene spheres to a child's toy lamb.

More ominously, they found that more than half the plankton samples, (young fish and their food) were contaminated with oil. Many of the young fry had swallowed the indigestible tiny polystyrene balls, raising fears that the survival of some commercial fish may be endangered.

"Clearly more work should be done," the NOAA program's coordinator Ken Sherman told SCIENCE NEWS. "We are concerned immediately about the resource species off New England where the contamination is heavy." He said



NOAA

Tar balls and plastics from ocean.

laboratory work has already begun to see what effects tar and plastic can have on the small fish.

Reflecting international concern over the pollution, the 180-foot Polish research vessel *Wieczno* (VYCH-no) began last Saturday to collect data in cooperation with NOAA.

The NOAA research confirms observations made by Thor Heyerdahl on his 1970 *Ra* expedition, during which he found large areas of the ocean covered with "enormous quantities of brown and black clots of asphalt, floating in something that looked like soap suds." He concluded, "There was still some life left in the ocean, but there were far more oil lumps than fish." □

Soviets and Americans tackle heart disease

Heart attacks and heart disease are as common in the Soviet Union as they are in the United States. So are the conditions that lead to heart ailments: high blood pressure, large amounts of cholesterol in the blood, smoking, obesity and lack of physical exercise. So when the Soviets and Americans signed science and technology agreements last May (SN: 6/3/72, p. 357), heart disease was one of the health problems they decided to cooperate on.

In September, Theodore Cooper of the National Heart and Lung Institute, accompanied by several other American heart authorities, visited Moscow to set up cooperative studies there. Last week and this week, Soviet heart experts led by Igor K. Shkhvatsabaya, director of the Myasnikov Research Institute of Cardiology in Moscow, are visiting the United States to get the studies under way here.

The Soviet and American heart scientists are evaluating each other's methods of treating different aspects of heart disease and trying to see which methods are best. While using essentially the same drugs for heart disease as do Americans, the Soviets still bring special expertise to this area. The Americans, for example, are keen on examining the Soviets' beta blocking

agents, which are believed to influence the heart's metabolism of sugar. The Americans, on the other hand, have outstanding experience in the surgical treatment of heart disease although, as Cooper points out, surgery is used only after drugs have failed.

Russian heart scientists will come to the United States for some months at a time and work at one of several dozen centers that do outstanding work in coronary artery surgery. American heart scientists will work months at a time in Moscow's Myasnikov Research Institute of Cardiology. These extended visits, unprecedented in Russian and American medical research, will give the investigators a chance to compare different kinds of heart treatment that lend themselves to ongoing evaluation.

Says Shkhvatsabaya: "The value of the research is greatly enhanced by the fact that foremost experts will participate in it on both sides." The exchange, he adds, should also "include young scientists, young experts, those who work with their own hands. This is an important aspect indeed."

The Soviet scientists are ready to come to the United States at any time, Shkhvatsabaya says. The studies are slated for completion in December 1973. □