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COVER: The !Kung San people in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana in Africa have provided researchers with evidence that early organic growth of the brain and central nervous system may be primarily responsible for the initial development of infantile emotional responses, such as smiling and fear of separation. This would explain why the timetable for such emotional development appears to be identical with that of children in Western civilization. See p. 74. (Photo: Mel J. Konner/Anthro Photo)

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LETTERS

Tangshan earthquake

We were pleased with your prominent display of the news on the great Tangshan earthquake that we recently brought back from China (SN: 6/18/77, p. 388).

You accurately report that we were told about certain precursory effects detected in advance of the quake. However, the inference that no prediction was issued because of "bureaucratic delay" is not ours. The critical precursors were widely scattered over an area of more than 30,000 square miles about Tangshan, and they mostly appeared hours before the shock. Most important, no foreshocks occurred. Hence, the problem was one of interpretation of weak, confusing, and abnormally late signals, not one of data transmission.

We were greatly surprised at the extent of decentralization of the earthquake-prediction system in China. For example, the successful prediction of the Lungling earthquake (May 29, 1976) was made by a local station manned entirely by amateurs. This was necessary because the foreshock that actually triggered the prediction occurred less than half an hour before the earthquake. Long-range and medium-range predictions are usually made at the national and provincial levels, but from then on the local groups are largely on their own. We found no evidence of bureaucratic controls at the local level. Moreover, any Revolutionary Committee is empowered to issue an earthquake warning over its jurisdictional area at its discretion. Of course, the local authorities are aware of the impending earthquake because of the long-range and medium-range predictions.

*Cinna Lomnitz, Larissa Lomnitz
Instituto de Geofisica
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Mexico 20, D.F. Mexico*

Jensen's IQ 'antics'

I read with interest your recent report on the latest 'antics' of Arthur Jensen. So now, after the research of Sir Burt has been exposed for a fraud, Jensen is beginning to go back on his original theories—slowly though. Jensen is willing to admit that the difference between blacks and whites, in terms of IQ, that develops between the ages of 5 and 16 is due to environment. He is still unwilling to concede that the difference that exists at the age of five may also be due to environment. This despite the fact that it is also almost a modern truism that the early years of life are

the most important for all aspects of development. I wonder if, in a few years, Jensen will have lived down his present notoriety enough to admit that IQ is totally environmentally determined. Maybe so, maybe so.

*P. Murtagh
Regina, Sask.*

Freedom to choose

Julie Ann Miller's article on saccharin (SN: 7/2/77, p. 12) misses the relevant portion of the saccharin controversy entirely. The question of saccharin being a carcinogen is widely disputed, but relatively unimportant. The real problem is with our diminishing freedom of choice. I would like to be able to decide for myself to use saccharin or not. Furthermore, I believe the majority of Americans are quite willing and able to make similar decisions. The current system of content labels on food packages is sufficient for the purpose.

The problem should not be solved by banning everything in sight, thus making every person's decision in advance. This does not encourage an independent, self-reliant population. The problem should be solved by giving individuals the tools and information necessary to make their own decisions.

*D.A. Bareiss
Somers, Conn.*

No more from Ralph Nader

I fail to see why Julie Ann Miller in the article "Are Rats Relevant?" (SN: 7/2/77, p. 13) quotes Ralph Nader as to the proper equivalent human dose of saccharin to that in the Canadian study on rats. Unless he is a different Ralph Nader than the one I know he has absolutely no qualifications in this or any other scientific field. The best he can do is repeat what someone else has said on the subject. I feel it would have been better to quote his source. He has been effective in stirring the bureaucracy to sometimes precipitate and frequently ill-advised action. I, personally, would prefer to hear no more of Ralph Nader's opinions on scientific subjects in your worthy publication. I think that the other media, pandering as they do to the public taste for nonsense, are a proper forum for anything Ralph Nader has to say.

*Leonard Shapiro
Union, N.J.*

Decalashes with a wet noodle

All on the same page (p. 4) of the July 2 issue, I read a million volts, about 250,000 amperes, 40 billion watts, a tenth of a microsecond, 8 trillion watts, etc. Please stay after school and write Megavolts (MV), kiloamperes (kA), Gigawatts (GW) and Terawatts (TW) one decatime each!

*Robert F. Fields
Orlando, Fla.*

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