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COVER: This roach-infested kitchen is not a scene from the latest summer horror flick. It is an illustration of one principle of evolution: the struggle for existence. These 130,000 roaches represent only three generations if all were to survive the struggle for existence. They are part of a new exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. See p. 10. (Photo: Smithsonian Institution)

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LETTERS

Waste disposal legislation

I would like to compliment you on your treatise regarding the status of present and future legislation in the area of illegal chemical waste disposal (SN: 5/26/79, p. 348). Your article provided an informative addendum to the CBS "60 Minutes" exposé, an addendum which I hope will continue to grow.

Legislation is the only method that can be presently employed to protect the public, but, as your article pointed out, the RCRA is too weak to obtain that protection. The situation is further complicated by the presence of inactive or abandoned dumps and the inadequate legislation designed to deal with them. Since funding is a major concern in any operation, we can expect further opposition from some major companies regarding the standardization of waste disposal practices. Is opposition an ethical position to assume when public safety is the major concern? Touché to the corporations who detoxify their chemical wastes. In light of the obvious benefits that result from this practice, it's worth spending a little more for a product.

Neal A. Sloane
Athens, Ohio

What's in a name

A short item in the May 19 issue of SCIENCE NEWS (p. 325) mentioned the possibility of a new Department of Education — DOE — being added to the federal maze.

To avoid confusion with the existing DOE (Department of Energy) and to more appropriately indicate the need for this new agency, I have several suggestions for alternate department names:

- Department of Public Education DOPE
- Department of Unified Public Education DUPE
- Department of Public Education and Science DOPES
- Department of Public Instruction & Educational Resources DOPIER

And somewhere in the new agency there should be a Department of Public Education — Youth. I'm sure the taxpayers will soon see General Youth Programs and that they are bound to find they have gotten a new Standard Health and Fitness Training section.

D.A. Versteeg
Spokane, Wash.

Address communications to Editor,
Science News, 1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Please limit letters to 250 words.

Using prudence

One should use the term "extremely dangerous" with some prudence. Mr. Bill Iverson's statement that 1,000 mR in one day is extremely dangerous (SN: 5/26/79, p. 339) is not justified. The National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (Report No. 54) fails to find sufficient evidence to advise therapeutic abortion for fetuses that have received up to 5,000 millirads acute dose.

The effectiveness of a warning is weakened by exaggeration of the danger. Unfortunately, this seems to be a mission of some governmental regulatory agencies. Other such agencies, not so subverted in their reporting, suffer by association through a common denominator.

James A. Hancock, Jr.
Norfolk, Va.

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