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Letters

Nicotine addiction

If nicotine really is an addictive drug as you reported ("Nicotine: A Drug of Choice?" SN: 1/18/86, p. 44), then perhaps we can declare that smokers have a disease (nicotinism). However, I can't quite imagine SmokEnders changing its name to Nicotinics Anonymous.
*Eric Werme
Milford, N.H.*

Let's imagine that a teenage boy is fatally wounded while playing Russian roulette and that his parents file a \$55 million wrongful-death suit against the firearms manufacturer. Lawyers for the defense will argue, and rightfully so, that the deceased chose to use the firearm for a purpose other than that for which it was originally intended.

If the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. can defend itself from tobacco lawsuits by arguing that its

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Cover: In a journal article and a new book, psychologist B. F. Skinner squares off with a wide range of his critics. It is the first time the controversial behaviorist has openly responded to his detractors. (Illustration: Robert Bourdeaux)



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victims are to blame for *choosing* to smoke, then we can all wonder for what purpose the cigarettes are *really* intended!

My thanks to Diane D. Edwards for her frank reporting.

*Joseph H. Lechner
Mt. Vernon, Ohio*

The influence of food and friends

Ralph S. Welsh's letter entitled "Delinquency's roots" (SN: 1/11/86, p. 19) mentions three possible causes of adolescent delinquency: junk food, delinquent friends and severe parental punishment (SPP). Welsh rejects the junk food hypothesis as "nothing but a red herring" and belittles the "bad friends" hypothesis, leaving only SPP.

While SPP is very important, I believe the nutritional hypothesis is still viable. Indeed, in this same issue of SCIENCE NEWS (p. 24) we read: "Diet can have a profound effect on be-

havior"

Further, Elliott and Huizinga, in their National Youth Survey, have found that having delinquent peers is the highest correlate (if not cause) of delinquency. An unbiased multivariate analysis would seem the most promising.

*M. J. Kephart
Boulder, Colo.*

Correction: Worldwatch Institute figures indicate that smokers consume almost 5 trillion cigarettes annually, not daily as stated in "An economic case for banning smoking?" (SN: 1/18/86, p. 40).

Correction: Melvyn J. Ball and the Dementia Study Group have been following up to 400 Alzheimer patients, not Down's patients as stated in "A Common Medical Denominator" (SN: 1/25/86, p. 61).

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