

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 130, No. 9, August 30, 1986

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$29.50; 2 yrs., \$50.00.
(Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per year.) Change of
address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please
state exactly how magazine is to be addressed.
Include zip code. For new subscriptions only call
(1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second class
postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional
mailing offices. 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)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Safely out of work

You're lucky few coal miners read SCIENCE NEWS. I don't think they'd be happy to learn what surprises technology is cooking up for them ("Stepping Into Danger," SN:7/12/86, p.28). Speaking of the mining industry, mechanical engineer Carl R. Peterson says, "Because we have not been able to remove the danger from the operator, it's clear we ought to consider removing the operator from the danger." Indeed, clear as coal. What a curious team of worker safety advocates Peterson and his robots will make. Workers will be safe because workers will be out of work!

In so many articles of this type I see little if any discussion of the devastating consequences for human workers and the profound cultural as well as economic damage many applications of technology leave in their

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Cover: Sophisticated data-reduction techniques allow astronomers to chart features on the surfaces of stars, even though they cannot directly see those surfaces. These maps show the distribution of chromium in the atmosphere of Eta Ursae Majoris; red indicates regions of overabundance, green indicates underabundance. Features can be followed from frame to frame as the star rotates. (Illustration: Lick Observatory)

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wake (women in Barbados doing word processing for New York firms at \$1 or less/hour; computerized container shipping creating quick and cheap enough shipping procedures to permit the relocation of industry and some agriculture overseas, etc.). We need a sharper dialogue and action within the scientific, and particularly the engineering, community. If serious consideration is not given to creating replacement jobs of equal worth, serious consideration ought to be given to pulling some plugs. Your readers should recognize that some science news is bad news.

Robert Copeland
Notre Dame, Ind.

Foot fault

In "Artful Adapter" (SN:8/2/86,p.72) is a picture showing two nautilus specimens cap-

tured at a depth of 300 meters and five pictures showing nautilus at a depth of 284 meters. On the first page of the article is the statement, "... the scientists have learned that the nautilus shares its preferred territory — at depths of 150 to 300 meters — with eels, crabs and shrimp."

Three paragraphs later is the statement, "Several factors limit the depth of the nautilus habitat. The most obvious is that its shell will be crushed by the water pressure at about 800 feet. But the creature is seldom found below 500 feet."

150 meters = 492 feet; 300 meters = 984 feet.
I didn't see any crushed shells.

Howard P. Caudle
Webster, N.Y.

Both references to feet should have read "meters."
— Ed.

AUGUST 30, 1986

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