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Letters

Preventing HIV transmission to tot

Regarding "Child-to-toddler HIV transmission" (SN: 1/1/94, p.12), no two people should be kept together when one has a transmissible disease and neither is able to understand how the disease is transmitted. No supervision can be thorough enough to prevent eventual spread of the disease.

A common example is the spread of head lice in the lower grades of school. Even with constant watchfulness by teachers and talks on prevention, until the children are old enough to completely understand the situation, they are likely to bring home head lice.

Helen M. Conlow
Forks, Wash.

On the trail of savanna grasses

We wish to clarify that while we see evidence for grass in Pakistan 14 Ma (million years ago), we have no evidence that these are savanna grasses ("Savannas leave signs of slow

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Cover: The persistence of a modern counterpart, *Lyngbya* (right), of the 950-million-year-old fossil *Paleolyngbya* (left) has prompted one researcher to suggest that blue-green bacteria are so well adapted that they have ceased to evolve. (Photo: Schopf/UCLA)
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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takeover," SN: 1/15/94, p.38). C4 grasses are first recorded in the diets of mammals at 9.4 Ma in Pakistan and 15.3 Ma in Kenya; initially, they were probably minor components of total plant biomass.

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Limits on nonagricultural options

Michael Huston is reported as saying that many Third World economies suffer because they rely on agriculture, even though they have poor soils ("Biodiversity okay for economy," SN: 1/1/94, p.15). He suggests they could improve their economies and perhaps harm the environment less by developing their mineral resources.

Most Third World countries suffer from more than just poor soil. Those that do have mineral resources usually lack the capital and technology required to extract them. Most

mineral extraction in such countries is done by multinational companies. While these companies do hire local citizens as workers, most of the technical, high-salaried positions are held by foreign nationals.

The vast majority of citizens of Third World nations have few options other than tilling the soil. This segment of the world's population also has the greatest growth rate and highest "unemployment" levels (often 80 percent). Unless First World countries provide massive aid to stop population growth and improve economic conditions for average citizens of the Third World, the environment will continue to suffer.

Lou Ellen Kay
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CORRECTION

In "Proposed federal budget keeps R&D afloat" (SN: 2/12/94, p.103), the funding for AIDS research should be \$1.4 billion, not \$1.4 million.

— The editors

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