ANTHROPOLOGY

Manus Like U. S. Ways

➤ MEN AND women of our civilization struggling with the traffic problem, the housing problem, the juvenile delinquency problem and fear of atomic and H-bombs are likely to wish for a simpler, more primitive way of life and to dream of an idyllic existence without such troubles on some South Sea island.

We are likely to blame all our troubles on our industrialized state and to think that industrialization came too fast for man to keep pace with it.

However, the Manus of the Admiralty Islands, fresh from the Stone Age, after seeing our modern technology during the war, say:

"You have found the way to have a society in which very large numbers of people can live together without continual quarreling, in which people have machines to help them so they do not die prematurely from overwork, in which you can keep your babies alive. This is what we want."

This feeling of the Manus should teach us something about mental health, Dr. Margaret Mead of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, pointed out at the Fifth International Congress on Mental Health in Toronto.

We must, she said, invest our new machines with the same "aura of wonder that poets of an earlier age were able to expend on the plough, the sail and the wheel, those inventions which lie at the base of civilization.

"Our factory towns, our factory buildings, the lives of those who work in factories have all been made ugly by our failure to make such a spiritual investment in the methods which have made it possible, for the first time in history, to ensure everyone against hunger and want," she said.

"Only when the beauty and magnitude of this new level of human civilization is fully recognized will we have the necessary moral and spiritual position within which we can assure mental health to our children and our adults who live within this changing period."

Science News Letter, August 28, 1954

BIOCHEMISTRY

Blood Plasma Expander

➤ A SYNTHETIC chemical has now joined the ranks of non-synthetic blood plasma expanders that can be used to fight shock and death in case of war or other national emergency.

The synthetic is PVP, short for polyvinyl pyrrolidone. PVP has now had an effective new drug application filed with the Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which means it may be sold in interstate commerce.

Certain limitations, however, have been imposed on PVP. The effective new drug application applies only to emergency use of PVP if blood, suitable blood plasma and other plasma volume expanders which are not stored in the body are not available. The other, not stored, plasma expanders are gelatin and dextran.

A second limitation provides that no more than 1,000 cubic centimeters, or about one quart, of PVP may be given to any one person in his lifetime. There is no such limitation on dextran or gelatin.

The reason for these limitations on PVP is that this synthetic chemical is stored in the body in organs involved in blood formation. Whether long-term, life-time storage of this synthetic chemical in the body could cause any damage is not known because the chemical has not yet been used long enough. Although not yet used in this country, it was used in Germany in World War II apparently without ill effect.

Our Food and Drug officials have decided that the safest course is to limit the use of PVP for the present while letting it become available in case of an emergency that would rapidly use up supplies of blood, plasma and other plasma expanders.

PVP is the first synthetic blood plasma expander to have an effective new drug application. It is made by Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, Ill., Cutter Laboratories, Berkeley, Calif., General Aniline and Film Corporation, New York, and Schenley Distillers Corporation, New York.

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ENGINEERING

"Three-Wire" Plugs Reduce Shock Hazards

➤ BECAUSE OF increasing electrical hazards in the average home, your appliances should be grounded through "three-wire" plugs and outlets.

This is recommended by Ralph Crump, senior electrical engineer and an authority in the field of electrical safety at the University of California at Los Angeles.

"Three-wire" convenience outlets and plugs, which safely return electric current to the ground, have been available for some time and are often used in large buildings. However, relatively few houses are equipped with such devices.

Danger spots around home are in kitchens, utility porches, bathrooms, basements and garages, which often contain power tools. The combination of wet spots and ungrounded electrical equipment is one that gives an especially dangerous situation.

Portable electrical appliances in the kitchen, such as mixers and blenders, if not grounded, should not be used in or near the sink. The washing machine is also a danger spot.

Aluminum foil around roasts and fowls in an electric range oven is another source of danger. Many such ovens have an open unit which can cause a serious shock if the foil comes in contact with the unit while being handled.

Electric heaters and dryers and sun lamps are very dangerous around the bathtub if not grounded.

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