

PUBLIC HEALTH

Investigate Drug Monopoly

The Kefauver committee, investigating monopoly practices, is to study the pricing mechanism of some drug firms for antibiotics and polio vaccines to sugar pills.

THE MANUFACTURERS of drugs will be questioned by the Kefauver committee when this session of the 86th Congress adjourns.

Sen. Estes Kefauver's (D. Tenn.) anti-trust and monopoly subcommittee of the judiciary committee has methodically begun selecting the major industries for study. The committee members have recently asked the steel and auto industries to explain just how they arrived at their prices.

Now it is time for the drug industry.

Interest in drug-pricing was sparked when Sen. Kefauver started receiving letters from older persons, especially those on fixed incomes. They all complained that they were spending too much of their income on high-priced drugs, especially antibiotics.

Most of the drug companies, both large and small, were subpoenaed and each sent a set of records to Washington.

Some drug firms, it is understood, contacted the "corner druggists," and suggested these men would be called upon to answer for their share of the final price or mark up of drugs. They were led to believe that the committee would be as hard on the little man as on the big firms. Sen. Ke-

fauver made it clear the hearings are actually aimed at the drug industry only.

He countered with his own campaign to convince the retail druggists that they will be excluded by postponing the hearings until after Congress adjourns. This is to avoid interference with any actions taken on bill S. 1083.

This is the fair trade bill that would set up a law to prevent the competition of the discount store pitted against small businesses.

The committee, chaired by Sen. Kefauver, wants to take a long look into the exact method by which drug firms establish the prices they charge for everything from antibiotics to polio vaccine to sugar pills. Furthermore, the committee wants to know the exact figures that represent each firm's yearly profit.

In this manner, Congress hopes to determine how much of the taxpayer's money is going into the development of "wonder" and other drugs. The committee can turn all evidence over to the Federal Trade Commission for action.

Nearly one year ago the Federal Trade Commission charged six leading antibiotics manufacturers with price fixing. The com-

panies were American Cyanamid Co., Bristol-Myers Co., Olin Mathieson Chemical Corp., Chas. Pfizer & Co., Inc., all of New York City, Bristol-Laboratories, Inc., Syracuse, and The Upjohn Co. of Kalamazoo, Mich.

More recently, five producers of the Salk vaccine have been similarly charged. They are Merck & Co. of Rahway, N. J., American Home Products Corp., New York; Eli Lilly & Co., Indianapolis; Parke, Davis & Co., Detroit, and Allied Laboratories, Inc., Kansas City, Mo. All have denied charges.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

ENGINEERING

Design Tiny Resuscitator To Aid Newborn Infants

See Front Cover

A SEVEN and one-half-ounce ultra-sensitive resuscitator may help save the lives of newborn infants whose breathing passages are obstructed.

The device can gently force air through an opening in the infant's airway the size of a pinhole. It automatically adjusts to the lung capacity, even if it is as small as that of a mouse or a parakeet.

The photograph on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER shows the resuscitator, with a thimble for the "mask" being used on a parakeet.

Developed by the Stanton Scientific Company, Glendale, Calif., the device feeds oxygen to the infant through a mask that will fit snugly over its face even in cases of temporary facial deformity common at birth.

The resuscitator can be used in some cases of umbilical strangulation, or when the infant's respiratory system does not function properly as a result of pain-relieving drugs administered to the mother during delivery. It is reportedly the first ever built especially for the artificial respiration of newborn infants.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

PHYSICS

Magnetic Dip Pole Drifts Northward

THE MAGNETIC DIP pole, that spot on the earth's surface where the south end of a freely suspended magnetic needle points directly downward, is drifting slowly northward.

Several determinations of the position of the north magnetic dip pole during the last ten years were analyzed by K. Whitham, E. I. Loomer and E. Dawson of the Dominion Observatory, Ottawa. They conclude that the pole will be at latitude 74.8 degrees north and longitude 99.6 degrees west at the beginning of 1960.

This corresponds to a point north of the Canadian mainland between Prince of Wales Island and Bathurst Island. The dip pole is drifting in a northerly direction at a rate of about 55 miles every ten years, it is reported in *Sky and Telescope* (June).

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959



ATOMIC SITE—The only entrance to the site of the first atomic explosion shows faded War Department warning signs on the mesh fence. The crater, which this historic explosion made on July 16, 1945, is no more than a slight hollow on the desert floor. Three of the four concrete piers, on which the 100-foot tower holding the bomb stood, are still upright. The site is within the boundaries of White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico.