

But fishing is very good in the lake, which is crowded with trout.

Another colony of pelicans nests on an island in Great Salt Lake, where there are no fish at all, because of the extreme saltiness of the water. To do their fishing, these birds must fly to the streams and smaller freshwater lakes of the region, and then wing the long way home to feed their young.

*Science News Letter, June 6, 1936*

## CHEMISTRY

## Sponge Made by Man Rivals Nature's Product

**A** MAN-MADE sponge that may prove to be superior in many ways to the natural product is a new achievement to be added to those of the chemist. The sponge is manufactured of highly purified wood and cotton cellulose, resembles a cake of Swiss cheese, its spongelike appearance being due to chemical reactions, and can be employed for all purposes to which sponges are ordinarily put.

The new synthetic sponge is tough and durable but becomes quite soft and pliable when wet, thus precluding any possibility of scratching the most highly polished surface. It will outlive the natural product, states a report (*Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*). This man-made sponge is resistant to cleaning compounds, soaps, greasy matter, and grit; is uniform in quality, size, shape, and texture; is free from odor and, since it floats, does not pick up grit and other foreign matter. It can be trimmed to any desired size without damage to its texture or durability, and can be used for washing, polishing, and drying almost any surface without the aid of towels or chamois. The duPont Cellophane Company of New York is the first to manufacture the sponge in the United States.

*Science News Letter, June 6, 1936*

## THE IDENTITY THEORY By Blamey Stevens

It has been said that the Identity Theory will be to Physics what Evolutionary Theory has been to Biology, namely, a fundament to which most branches of the subject are referable.

By postulating the identity of space, time and inertia, instead of a space-time continuum, physical phenomena may be interpreted rationally, and concepts such as relativity and photons become superfluous.

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## PHYSIOLOGY

# Noise Blamed for Many Evils At Meeting of Deafened

**A**N ALL-ROUND indictment of noise, as harmful to health, happiness, and the pursuit of a living, was made by Dr. W. R. Barss at the conference of the American Society for the Hard of Hearing in Boston.

Dr. Barss, physicist and technical member of Boston's noise commission, cited experiments to support his denunciations.

"Statistical analysis in New York City," he said, "reveals the fact that a large percentage of automobile and taxi drivers are partially deaf, and that this percentage is increasing, and the same is known to be the case among laborers or mechanics exposed to constant noise."

Possibility that noise is playing a definite part in the mounting toll of deaths due to diseases of the circulation, particularly heart disease, was suggested by the speaker.

In experiments, a popping firecracker raised systolic blood pressure. A telephone bell was found to speed up the heart rate. Effects of noise on pressure within the skull have been tested by bursting a blown-up paper bag, and this sharp sound raised the brain pressure to four times the normal for seven seconds.

Increased pressure within the skull, he explained, means an increased circulation, and that in turn calls for an increased amount of work on the part of the heart.

Using mice, instead of men, in laboratory experiments, it has been learned that white mice exposed to noise eat five per cent less than those eating in quiet, and growth is retarded ten per cent, as compared with the mice protected from noise. These experiments, Dr. Barss declared, probably have a bearing on what goes on in human beings under similar conditions.

Continuing his indictment of noise, as bad for mind and body, Dr. Barss said that it causes fatigue, thereby shortening years of efficiency; increases accidents; possibly aggravates crime psychology; and interferes with the joy of living.

As early as 720 B.C., the city of Sybaris in Italy had regulations prohibiting industrial noise in residential areas, Dr. Barss has found by digging into history, but it has remained for the pres-

ent era to become noise-conscious, and to try to find out what noise actually does.

### Conditions Improving

Conditions for the deafened have greatly improved in the past 15 years, Miss Josephine Timberlake, superintendent of the Volta Bureau at Washington, reported. Use of lip reading as an aid in conversation is increasing. Such devices as the audiometer and "field fones" have passed the stage where they seemed "thrilling experiences" to the hard of hearing. Stronger efforts are being made to prevent loss of hearing, to conserve what is left, and to prevent voice control from deteriorating in individuals who cannot well hear their own speech.

*Science News Letter, June 6, 1936*

## ARCHAEOLOGY

## Nature, Not Man, Made Mummies in Island Cave

**N**ATURE, not man, preserved New Guinea's mysterious group of human "mummies," found sitting knees-to-chin in a long cave in the Morabe goldfields district.

With this verdict, two British scientists have apparently upset the earlier pronouncement on discovery of the mummies, that New Guinea natives once knew how to mummify bodies as the Egyptians did, and perhaps learned the art from distant Egypt itself.

The mummies appear to be dried-up, not embalmed, declares E. L. Gordon-Thomas, reporting to the scientific journal, *Man*. Conditions in the limestone cave, high above the sea, served to dehydrate the bodies, is the supporting view of Dr. E. T. Brennan, principal medical officer of New Zealand.

Finding the light-skinned corpses—over 60 of them—may shed considerable light on problems of New Guinea anthropology, Mr. Gordon-Thomas believes. The ancient chapters of New Guinea's habitation by man have been little probed. Present day natives cannot explain the burial customs that mummies of the cave tomb represent, nor can the natives show how people would handle and use the huge stone pestles and mortars which have been found in this area.

*Science News Letter, June 6, 1936*