

United States and other places, and suggests that 95% or more of all cases might be directly caused by some as yet unidentified alkaloid or antibiotic in the potatoes. Some weight is undoubtedly given to the hypothesis by the preliminary findings of Poswillo and co-workers (*Nature*, **239**, 462; 1972) of skull defects in four of eleven fetuses of marmosets fed on diseased potatoes. However, the time/space relationship between malformation incidence and blight is not close everywhere in the British Isles, central nervous system malformations are found in parts of the world where potatoes are not consumed (Emanuel, *Lancet*, ii, 876; 1972), and the marmoset anomalies do not obviously involve the central nervous system. Also, it would be difficult to see how blight, if it is so potent a teratogen as is suggested, would affect only one of identical twins, as happens often, an obvious objection to that as well as other hypotheses. In any case, it is likely that one is dealing with not a single teratogen malformation but one which is multifactorial.

These objections apart, it is perhaps unfortunate and somewhat worrying that the theory has been given so much publicity in the scientific, medical and other press, often in highly emotional terms with claims of a relationship, even if correct, which is most unlikely to be as direct as has been suggested by Renwick. A climate of opinion is being created in the general public which makes it very difficult to launch a properly randomized and controlled trial of potato avoidance in susceptible women going in for a further pregnancy, who have previously had a child with spina bifida or anencephaly. Such a trial is probably the only way in which

this theory could be tested out quickly in man and could probably be completed in less than two years if carried out on a multicentre basis. What is even more worrying is that in the meanwhile some women who have avoided pregnancy for fear of a recurrence might embark upon a pregnancy in the belief that potato avoidance will eliminate that risk.

Yours faithfully,

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## Announcements

### Miscellaneous

Royal medals of the Royal Society have been awarded to Sir Derek Barton, Imperial College of Science and Technology, Dr F. H. C. Crick, MRC, and Dr W. B. Lewis, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited.

The following have been elected Academicians of the Soviet Academy of Sciences: S. M. Nikol'skii and Yu. V. Prokhorov (mathematics), A. S. Vorovik-Romanov and B. M. Vul (physics and astronomy), A. A. Logunov (nuclear physics), V. S. Semenikhin (information processing), A. D. Sadykov (organic chemistry), A. F. Belov (metallurgy), A. L. Takhtadzhian and D. K. Belyaev (biology). New Corresponding Members of the Academy include: O. B. Lupanov and N. N. Govorun (mathematics), K. A. Valiev, L. N. Kurbatov, Zh. I. Alferov, Yu. A. Osip'yan, I. M. Khalatnikov, V. A. Krat, N. A. Borisevich,

and K. S. Aleksandrov (physics and astronomy), A. M. Baldin, V. N. Gribov and L. M. Barkov (nuclear physics), V. S. Avduevskii, O. M. Belotserkovskii and V. V. Petrov (control processes), A. N. Nesmeyanov, Kh. M. Minachev and V. P. Mamaev (general and technical chemistry), V. B. Aleskovski and M. M. Shults (physical chemistry and the technology of materials), I. V. Torgov (biochemistry), G. A. Viktorov and A. V. Zhirmunskii (general biology).

## Erratum

In the article "Nature of the Molecular Defect in Phenylketonuria and Hyperphenylalaninaemia" by Paul A. Friedman, Seymour Kaufman and Ellen Song Kang (*Nature*, **240**, 157; 1972), the  $K_m$  value for DMPH<sub>4</sub> given on line 6 of paragraph 6 should be 0.05 mM.

## Reports and Publications

not included in the Monthly Books Supplement

### Great Britain and Ireland

- University of London. University College Calendar 1972-73. Pp. cvii+303. (London: University College, 1972.) [2310]  
The Edinburgh School of Agriculture. Annual Report 1971. Pp. 90. (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh School of Agriculture, 1972.) [2310]  
Council for Scientific Policy. Third Report of the Council for Scientific Policy. (Cmnd. 5117.) Pp. 35. (London: HMSO, 1972.) 24p net. [2310]  
Family Planning in Five Continents. Pp. 34. (London: International Planned Parenthood Federation, 1972.) [2310]  
Department of the Environment. Report of Working Party on Local Authority/Private Enterprise Partnership Schemes. Pp. 66. (London: HMSO, 1972.) 47p net. [2410]  
Natural Environment Research Council: National Institute of Oceanography. Collected Reprints, Vol. 19. Reprints 778-830. (Wormley, Godalming: National Institute of Oceanography, 1971.) [2410]  
Microbiological Research Establishment. Abstracts of Work Published in 1971. Pp. 20. (Porton Down, Salisbury: Microbiological Research Establishment, 1972.) [2510]

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