defense and are primarily used to reenforce the natural defenses of the epidermis. They must themselves be nonirritating, cosmetically attractive (otherwise the worker will not use them) and fairly easily removed by ordinary washing. Indeed, one of their most useful functions is to obviate the need for chemical cleansers, which almost invariably degrease the skin and are themselves a potent cause of dermatitis. Barrier creams are of three types, oil-resisting, water-resisting and absorption-resisting, and it is important that the right one should be chosen. Great advances have been made in the last few years in the preparation of these creams, and many reputable cosmetic firms now produce a range of products which can be used with confidence. At the same time, trials made in the laboratory only are not satisfactory, and it is encouraging to learn that the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has appointed a sub-committee to submit formulas for barrier preparations suitable for inclusion in the British Pharmaceutical Codex. At present selected barriers are undergoing practical trials in industrial processes—the only reliable method of testing.

Dr. Horner rightly points out that the prevention of industrial dermatitis consists primarily in the practical adaptation of the principles of "minimal contact" combined with personal hygiene, of selected personnel and periodic inspection by a competent person. The use of barriers alone cannot be successful.

This useful and authoritative article should be read by all those responsible for the medical care of industrial workers.

CATHERINE SWANSTON [BULL. HYG.].

Radioactive Substances and X-Ray

POSITIVE CEPHALIN-CHOLESTEROL FLOCCULATION TEST IN X-RAY WORKERS. NELL BUTLER and JAMES F. CRENSHAW, Am. J. M. Technol. **14**:255 (Sept.) 1948.

Cephalin-cholesterol flocculation tests were made on the serums of 28 x-ray workers who had been exposed for periods ranging between four months and 20 years. The data are presented in a table which correlates exposure time, age, sex, gastrointestinal symptoms, jaundice, tenderness of the liver, and enlargement of the liver and the spleen with results of 24 hour cephalin and 48 hour cholesterol flocculation tests. The authors conclude that at least 82 per cent show some positive tests and suggest that this may be a measure of slight changes in liver function due to roentgen irradiation.

ADAPTED FROM NUCLEAR SC. ABST.

PUBLIC HEALTH ASPECTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY. ABEL WOLMAN, Am. J. Pub. Health **40**:1502-1507 (Dec.) 1950.

The atomic energy industry has been termed the most dangerous ever devised by man. The truth of this is evidenced by the fact that it is an industry in which workers are handling radioactive material equivalent to millions of tons of radium. The author discusses five aspects of atomic energy of interest to the public health profession:

1. Peacetime effects. These include the potential hazards arising from the production processes as well as from the industrial wastes.

2. Peacetime catastrophe. The unique hazards of this industry emphasize the need for planning by local health departments for disaster. Experience has demonstrated the unreliability of "self-policing" practices in industry.

3. Wartime problems. The atomic bomb, if used against the United States, would create death and destruction on a scale never before experienced in this country. This would confront the federal, state, and local health departments with gigantic problems which could be handled effectively only if proper planning and organization had been done in advance.

4. Radiation in medical and other specialties. The standards of protection in medical and industrial fields should be equivalent to those existing in Atomic Energy Commission plants. The current lack of recognition by state and local health departments of their responsibility is attributed to an ostrich-like attitude related to the secrecy and complexity of the industry and to a desire to pass on the responsibility to a federal agency. It is time for the public health workers to realize that they are confronted with a great responsibility as well as a great opportunity.