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LETTERS

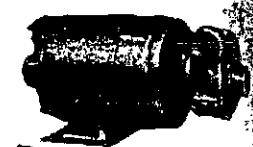
Reread Carson

DEAR SIR:

I was surprised to find that the articles by Rachel Carson in the *New Yorker* have produced the reaction they have on the editorial pages of C&EN. After reading two editorials in as many weeks, I reread Miss Carson's articles, thinking I had missed the "emotional" quality they are claimed to have. Miss Carson is not impartial, perhaps, in the sense that she takes no stand, but she is neither unreasonable nor unreasoning, and the emotional quality of her articles is no higher than that of the editorials. It is hard to understand particularly the second paragraph in the editorial of July 30. There are "serious implications" in Miss Carson's articles, as you state, but not an "absence of firm factual support." Moreover, it certainly is not "clear from Miss Carson's articles" that "unfavorable results from pesticides are limited." She presents case after case to show precisely the opposite.

It is an interesting coincidence that the two examples of opposition to pesticide use mentioned in the news article, "Pesticide Sales Pick Up," (C&EN, July 2, page 21) are two of the cases Miss Carson develops most fully in her second article. She devotes a dozen paragraphs to the fire ant, including quoted statements from six sources concerning the effects of the control program and the damage done by the fire ant, which is quite at variance with the unsupported statement in C&EN. A similar amount of space is spent on the history and results of successive "eradication" programs on the gypsy moth. Mr. Soraci's irritable statement contrasts strikingly with Miss Carson's temperate discussion of this case, as well as others she takes up, including the Japanese beetle and the Dutch elm disease. (Ezron's Note: For other letters and comment on this, see C&EN, July 16, page 5.)

The editor of C&EN calls for "extremely careful reading of the facts" and avoidance of emotionalism, and this is certainly necessary in a problem of this importance. But he has not troubled to get the facts on Miss Carson straight nor to determine just what she has said. He does her a serious



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in implying that she advocate a primitive state of nature. Near the beginning of the article she states that "insect control of some sort is necessary and she returns to this theme at the end of the last article. But she is subject to the indiscriminate use of insecticides and herbicides without due consideration of the consequences and gives example after example to show that frequently massive spraying is not only dangerous, expensive and wasteful, but that it usually does not accomplish its purpose, and, furthermore, that insect and weed control can often be obtained more effectively and cheaply by less drastic methods. The editor implies that the negative evidence for the utility of insecticides need not be considered with great care as the detrimental side effects. In view of the dangerous nature of the chemicals involved, this attitude is not wholly reasonable, especially with the case of thalidomide in the other field so fresh in our minds. A scientist of Miss Carson's reputation deserves more careful consideration and discussion than she has received so far in the pages of C&EN. She has not told the whole truth, she should be refuted with facts, not with innuendoes.

EDMUND J. BLAU

Washington, Md.

Drug Patents

DEAR SIR:

For some time I had been puzzled by an oft-seen statement that the bill would strengthen and improve the operation of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, as originally proposed by Sen. Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.) limited new drug patents to three years. This appeared to me to be an extremely arbitrary provision. The *Saturday Review* for Aug. 4 (page 36) contains a more detailed description of this provision of the bill as originally proposed. It makes Sen. Kefauver's patent provision clear and much more reasonable. I quote, "A requirement that if, after holding a patent on a drug for three years, the maker of that drug still sells the drug to druggists at a price more than 500% above the manufacturing cost of the drug, then the drugmaker must license other companies to make and sell the same drug."

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III, P2824

LETTERS

Should Save Money

Sir: Your editorial, "Stature for Science," and the news report, "ACS Recommend Scientists for National Academy of Science" (C&EN, July 16, pages 7 and 81, respectively), strike a familiar chord: As professional scientists, we too are to try to get our share in the till. It is indeed unfortunate that your argument for a stipend to accompany the National Academy of Science is not a question of principle, for it is a foregone conclusion that you would not find an offer from Congress to establish a \$1.00 award acceptable.

I am unimpressed with the fundamental importance of Boy Scout award medals, National Medals of Science, and even a Nobel Prize as significant motivating factors in the life and research of a truly professional person.

As a professional society, our efforts should be devoted, at least in part, to the reduction of governmental expenditures wherever possible, rather than the reverse.

CHANNING H. LUSHBOUGH, Ph.D.
Evansville, Ind.

"Shortage of Facts and Excess of Emotion"

DEAR SIR: Your editorial on pesticides (July 30) suffers from the very faults it finds in others: shortage of facts and excess of emotion.

Shortage of facts: The editorial suppresses the fact that not all pesticides are on trial. Among the broad spectrum of pesticides can be found effective agents which because of specificity and/or fast rate of decomposition can be considered relatively safe. There is a well known parallel in the field of detergents and the sewage problems caused by them.

After pointing out the danger of incorrect handling ("carelessness and callousness") the editorial presents as a fact something which is merely a vision of Utopia: "Control adequate for safe use is possible." If the editor knows how to supervise the handling of dangerous poisons by hundreds of thousands of farmers, dairymen, crop dusters, and plain home gardeners, he

ought to tell the authorities who are trying to control the use of narcotics.

Excesses of emotion: "of humans dying of starvation." We were discussing the good old U.S.A., I believe, not Red China. I suggest you dry your tears. It may cheer you up to think of all the storage bins filled with excess agricultural products and all the rent you are helping to pay with your taxes. The more pesticides, the more rent. By the way, much damage to bird life is caused by treating ornamental trees with pesticides; but then, think of the starving humans saved in the nick of time by a dish of elm leaves.

PETER C. MUFFAT
Asheville, N.C.

*French organic chem.
Wurzburg 1937
my chemical-dyes
1038-42*

DEAR SIR: *Oliver Matheson 42*

When the sellers of pesticides for profit lay the burden of proof on the buyer, then I submit the mute common man needs an advocate with the power and persuasion of Rachel Carson to defend him. Rachel Carson was writing against the broadside and indiscriminate use of general-purpose insecticides. I did not see anywhere in her articles that she denied that "fundamental research must allow the scientist to follow his curiosity in the search for new knowledge." In fact, I fail to see the connection between the search for truth and the sale and application of pesticides.

HERBERT INSLEY
Washington, D.C.

Otis Is in Kansas

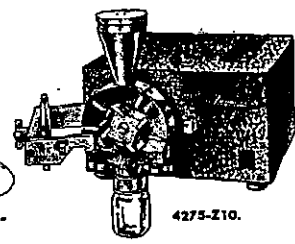
DEAR SIR: It was noticed that your article, "Government's Helium Program Ready to Roll," in the July 9 C&EN (page 30), listed Otis, Tex., as one of the Bureau of Mines' helium plants. It is my opinion that the Otis plant is located in Otis, Kan., and not in Texas, or does one also exist in the Lone Star State? Please don't give everything to Texas!

GENE W. SCHEMIDT
Hays, Kan.

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Book Reviews



Cardiopulmonary Data for Children and Young Adults. By D. E. Cassels and M. Morse. Pp. 184. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1962. \$7.

The book consists of a series of physiological values in tabular form obtained from laboratory studies performed at the University of Chicago. Nine topics are presented: Heart rate and blood pressure; blood and plasma volume; hemoglobin concentration and oxygenation; carbon dioxide and pH values of arterial and venous blood and plasma; electrolyte concentrations of plasma and the effect of exercise on electrolytes; selected respiratory data; and maximum breathing capacity. Data obtained from patients with congenital heart disease and kyphoscoliosis are also presented. The last 2 chapters include tables of electrocardiographic changes during exercise and studies of peripheral blood flow in children.

This cannot be regarded as a complete handbook of cardiopulmonary data, nor do the authors intend it to be so. The fact that all investigation was carried out in one laboratory under the same supervision lends greater significance to the results. Although identical figures may not be obtained by other laboratories, the results should be easily related. Baseline values for normal and deranged function are an absolute necessity in advancement of any science, and this book should be a useful addition to any laboratory where cardiac or respiratory studies are made. Descriptions of procedure under each heading are complete and lucid. One might disagree as to types of laboratory procedure chosen in some instances, but this is no real criticism. The book is enthusiastically recommended.

DEAN CROCKER, M.D.

Silent Spring. By Rachel Carson. 368 p. Cloth. \$5. Houghton Mifflin, 2 Park St., Boston 7, 1962.

Rachel Carson, like a zealous and overanxious mother, wants to be sure that her children do not play with matches. So she has constructed an abominable snowman which has a chlor-dane body, long malathion arms, and a parathion head which belches forth huge clouds of DDT. The name of her snowman is *Silent Spring*. And if you don't watch out, it will upset your chromosomes, mutilate your genes, and decimate your erythrocytes.

Miss Carson, in fact, is so protective and so fearful lest her children get burned, that she would like to abolish matches from the face of the earth, the matches being chemical pesticides. This, of course, has made the pesticide manufacturers, who run a \$300 million busi-

ness, quite angry. The result is that *Silent Spring* is on the best-seller list.

Miss Carson is a biologist and the major portion of her book is concerned with the effect of chemical pesticides on the so-called balance of nature. Of particular interest to physicians are 2 chapters on cellular metabolism and the carcinogenic properties of several insecticides, some of which are available as household products.

That *Silent Spring* has raised a storm, second not even to the cranberry crisis of 3 Thanksgivings ago, is now evident. Part of the irritation that comes in reading the book, outside of the fact that Miss Carson uses emotion-arousing words, is that one feels somehow that she is partly right but cannot know where she is wrong. One is left with the impression that Miss Carson is simply against chemistry and for biology, or against synthetics and for life.

Instinctively, one wants to choose sides in the Carson vs. Chemical Pesticides controversy. The side you stand on depends largely on whether your hobby is bird-watching or your occupation is food-growing.

Regardless of one's personal feeling about the chemical pesticide controversy, the book should be read by all physicians. The fact that patients are reading it is justification enough. Whether or not the balance of nature is going to be ruined or whether or not we shall all die of leukemia is a moot point. With the population experts worrying that too many people are being born and with Miss Carson worrying that too many people are dying, perhaps a conference ought to be called.

M. THERESA SOUTHGATE, M.D.

Syphilis, Modern Diagnosis and Management. Anonymous. Pp. 63, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Health Service Publication No. 743, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C., 1960. \$2.

In 63 small pages of type arranged in an easily readable style and with 43 good color illustrations, modern knowledge of syphilis has been well summarized. Each stage of the disease is described succinctly and with the authority of thorough understanding and experience. Undoubtedly this is a reflection of the assistance of Sidney Olansky and Evan W. Thomas as acknowledged in the book.

William J. Brown, Chief of the Venereal Disease Branch of the Communicable Disease Center, in the foreword, calls attention to the reversal in 1955 of the decline of syphilis. Since 1958, the incidence of infectious early syphilis in many

communities has doubled each year, although there has not been a parallel increase in the number of reported cases of gonorrhea.

One thing that can be done to reduce the resurgence of syphilis is to teach the basic facts of the disease to medical students and house staff. Each should have his own copy of this practical and inexpensive monograph. Even the consultant dermatologist may find a few "pearls" neatly arranged throughout the book—which to some will be a reminder of the good old days and books on syphilology.

To bring knowledge of syphilis up to date, the following excellent review of the subject is called to the attention of the readers: Beerman, H., et al.: Syphilis: Review of the Recent Literature, 1960-1961, *Arch. Intern. Med.* 109:123-344 (March) 1962.

HARVEY BLANK, M.D.

Excerpted from *Arch. Derm.* 86:95 (July) 1962.

Space Medicine. By Ursula T. Slager. Prentice-Hall Space Technology Series. 388 p. Cloth. \$12. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962.

The author says her 13-chapter book has been "written for the aerospace engineer whose limited time does not permit him to collect and synthesize the diverse material now available, and for the busy physician . . ." a new field. The book is a collection of the known physical, physiological, and mathematical facts concerning man's reactions to the major stresses encountered in space flight. After each subject, i.e., pressure, temperature, the electromagnetic spectrum, acceleration, noise and vibration, weightlessness, and so forth, there is a brief description of the clinical illnesses and pathological changes resultant from excessive exposure. These parts are well done. Toxicology is poorly done, and why the author omits anthropometric measurements and percentile cut-offs is not apparent.

The book is good as a reference and as a basis for studying so-called human engineering. What it does not do, and what the aerospace medical consultant must be prepared to do and to document, is to describe the limits of the total built-in environment within which the engineer must stay when designing hardware which will expose man to multiple stresses for varying periods of time in the very hostile environment of outer space. There is a tremendous amount of useful information in the book, and we take off our hats to this lady for having undertaken the labor of digging it all out and putting it in one place.

WILLIAM F. ASHE, M.D.

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