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BIOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE IN THE POSTWAR WORLD[1]

By Dr. ROBERT F. GRIGGS
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

BIOLOGISTS have not measured up either to their opportunities or to their responsibilities in contributions to the war effort. It is highly important for the public welfare and for the welfare of biologists that this situation be improved. There are many clear signs that the biological arts and sciences are going to assume a much more important role in public service than they ever have before. It is important that we biologists be able to perform this increased service that we should be rendering.

For the first time in history food is being used as an instrument in national and international policy. Food policy as it is now being formulated by the Interim Commission of Food and Agriculture set up by the Hot Springs Conference of the United Nations is the best device yet brought forward for preventing future wars.

How far the recommendations of the Interim Commission will be put into practice it is not now possible to say. But I believe it certain that some sort of food policy will be adopted by the civilized nations. Some policy will in fact have to be adopted. Food production in the United States has increased much more than in the first World War. It is up about one third over 1939. It has increased even more in Britain. There is good reason to suppose that further increases rather than recessions will occur. We shall have food surpluses—if we are to consider them surpluses—much greater than during the depression. In the face of the situation that is surely coming only two courses are possible: (1) we may either restrict production and put surplus producers on some sort of a

[1] Invitation paper before a joint session of Section G and the Botanical Society of America in Cleveland, September 13, 1944 (somewhat revised).

voltage in the bridge. After suitable amplification, the imbalance voltage activates a direct writing instrument, such as the GE Photoelectric Recorder or an ink-writer of the type used in electroencephalography.

The block diagram of Fig. 1 shows the general

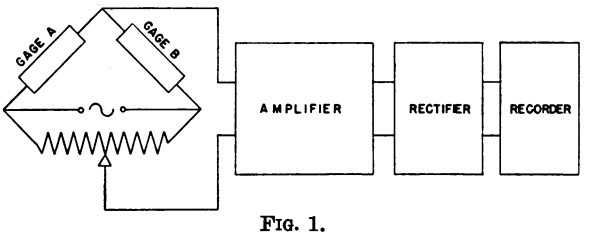

FIG. 1.

arrangement of the apparatus. The amplifier used in our present recorder is specially designed for extremely high sensitivity, low noise and low drift. These design features make the recorder useful in measuring and recording phenomena which are to be observed over a period of many hours.

A sample of direct ink records made with this recorder and the GE Photoelectric Recorder is shown in Fig. 2. The record represents the finger pulse

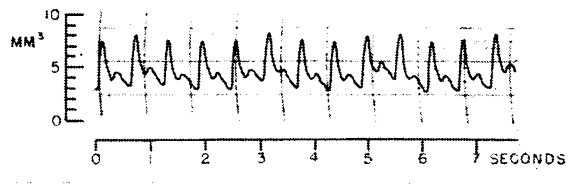

FIG. 2.

volume of the first phalanx of a human finger.

Simple modifications of the equipment make possible electrical recording of blood pressure, arterial pulse, muscle movements and other physiological variables. The sensitivity and stability of the amplifier have also proved useful in engineering applications of the strain gage.

The strain gage recorder was developed by the authors while they were senior physiologist, associate electrical engineer and senior pharmacologist, respectively, at the Climatic Research Unit, Fort Monmouth Signal Laboratory. It has been employed for about six months in the investigations of that Unit.

A full description of the strain gage recorder and of its various physiological applications will be published in an engineering memorandum of the Climatic Research Unit.

HARRY GRUNDFEST
ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, NEW YORK CITY
JAMES J. HAY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
SERGEI FEITELBERG
MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL, NEW YORK CITY

A MODIFIED TECHNIQUE FOR READING THE RAPID SLIDE AGGLUTINATION OF LEPTOSPIRA

CONSIDERABLE difficulty has been experienced by the author in reading weak (1+ or 2+) reactions in the macroscopic agglutination test for Leptospirosis.[1] The antigen often forms an amorphous precipitate that seriously interferes with the accurate reading of these weak reactions.

In an effort to alleviate this difficulty it was decided to check each dilution with a modified dark-field technique similar to that used in the test-tube agglutination method for Leptospirosis.

The ordinary Abbe condenser is used in combination with a metallic dark-field stop placed in the slot provided beneath the Abbe condenser. Any light source may be utilized. A small drop of each dilution of the test is placed on a slide and examined, without a coverglass, under the low power objective. The condenser is then adjusted so that the organisms appear brilliant in the dark field.

This method clearly demonstrates the slightest clumping or agglutination. A strong positive reaction shows large definite clumps of organisms with a clear background. A weak positive reaction shows smaller clumps of organisms with a few individual organisms in the field. A negative reaction shows a homogeneous field of individual organisms. In all cases artifacts or precipitates appear as distinct brightly illuminated particles easily distinguishable from clumps of organisms.

In order to become familiar with the appearance of these reactions, it is advisable to make dilutions of known positive and negative sera and examine them in this manner.

HENRI P. MINETTE
BACTERIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES,
BOARD OF HEALTH, TERRITORY OF HAWAII

[1] Using Leptospira Diagnostic Antigen marketed by Lederle Laboratories, Inc., 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y.

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