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<i>Biology and Agriculture in the Postwar World:</i> DR. ROBERT F. GRIGGS	235	<i>Growth Regulators to Retard Abscission of Apple Fruits:</i> DR. H. B. TUKEY and DR. C. L. HAMNER.	
<i>Obituary:</i>		<i>Effect of Merthiolate (Lilly) on Certain Specific Precipitation Reactions:</i> DR. DAVID PRESSMAN and ALLAN L. GROSSBERG	250
<i>Sumner A. Ives:</i> DR. JOHN R. SAMPEY, JR. <i>Recent Deaths</i>	240	<i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:</i>	
<i>Scientific Events:</i>		<i>A Strain Gage Recorder for Physiological Volume, Pressure and Deformation Measurements:</i> DR. HARRY GRUNDFEST, PROFESSOR JAMES J. HAY and DR. SERGEI FEITELBERG. <i>A Modified Technique for Reading the Rapid Slide Agglutination of Leptospira:</i> HENRI P. MINETTE	255
<i>The Proposed Organization of Scientific Research in India; The Income of Professional Chemists; The Nutrition Foundation; St. Louis Conference on Gene Action in Micro-Organisms</i>	240	<i>Science News</i>	10
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	242		
<i>Discussion:</i>			
<i>Sir Isaac Newton and the Sensitive Radiometer:</i> DR. C. G. ABBOT. <i>A 2,3-Butanediol-Glycerol Fermentation:</i> DR. A. C. NEISH, A. C. BLACKWOOD and DR. G. A. LEDINGHAM. <i>Is Caste Differentiation in Ants a Function of the Rate of Egg Deposition?:</i> DR. STANLEY E. FLANDERS. <i>Staffing Science Departments after the War:</i> DR. HENRY E. SIGERIST. <i>Science Talent in American Youth:</i> DR. HAROLD A. EDGERTON and LIEUTENANT STEUART HENDERSON BRITT	244		
<i>Scientific Books:</i>			
<i>The Production of Antibodies:</i> DR. HANS NEURATH. <i>Mushrooms:</i> DR. FRED J. SEAVER. <i>Selected Experiments in Chemistry:</i> DR. HUBERT N. ALYEA	248		
<i>Reports:</i>			
<i>The Southern Research Institute:</i> DR. W. A. LAZIER	249		
<i>Special Articles:</i>			
<i>Role of Fat in Incisor Depigmentation of Vitamin E-Deficient Rats:</i> DR. HUMBERTO GRANADOS and DR. HENRIK DAM. <i>Urinary Excretion of Penicillin in Man after Oral Administration with Gastric Antacids:</i> JESSE CHARNEY, HARVEY E. ALBURN and FINN W. BERNHART. <i>Aerosol Application of</i>			

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BIOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE IN THE POSTWAR WORLD¹

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

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

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

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

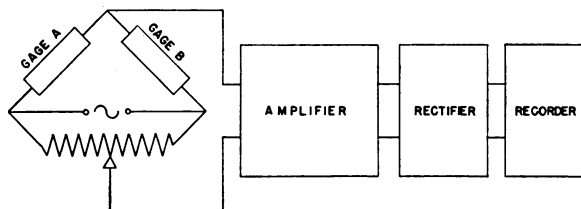


Fig. 1.

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

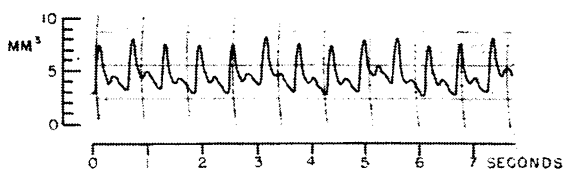


Fig. 2.

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.

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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.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- CHIDESTER, F. F. *Nutrition and Glands in Relation to Cancer*. Pp. xxii+247. The Lee Foundation for Nutritional Research, Milwaukee, Wis. \$3.00. 1944.
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- WALLING, LALIA and KENNETH SILER. *Laboratory Manual for Elementary Physiology*. Fourth Edition. Illustrated. Pp. 187. C. V. Mosby Company. \$1.50. 1945.

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