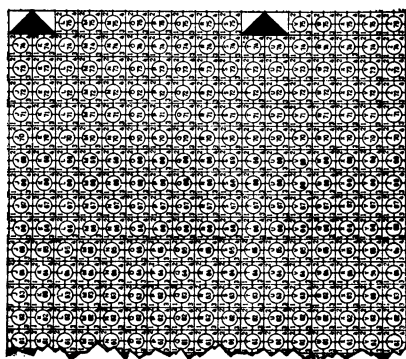


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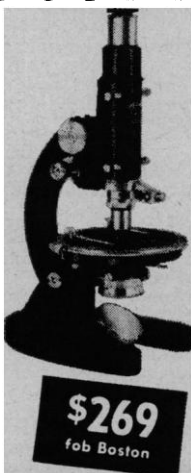
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French chemical industries placed on the market a number of weed killers. An investigation of the over-all value of these substances was undertaken by Roger Gautheret of the Sorbonne, and after intensive field trials he concluded that while they did kill the weeds as desired, their long-term effects on the quality and viability of the crops was such as to make many of them not only valueless but damaging. The industry stood to lose millions which they had poured into the chemical processes and into their agricultural propaganda. A strong effort was made to have Gautheret's report suppressed, but he stood his ground and the objectionable products were withdrawn from the market.

One of the most tragic examples of this sort of thing in the United States is the current campaign to eliminate the fire ant in the South by airplane dusting of wide areas with specific insecticides. The ants are being controlled, but in the process local birds which eat insects, and carnivores which eat the birds, are being destroyed, and a whole chain of untoward biological events has been set going which was not foreseen because insufficient thought and study had been given to the problem in the preliminary stages. The whole question of radioactive fallout is just another example of action without sufficient study.

We cannot and should not halt "progress." But we should do our best to anticipate whether our procedures are likely to produce "progress." We should not leave the evaluation of weed killers or of steroid hormones or of radioactive products to the chemists; the closest kind of collaboration with botanists (students of weeds), with physiologists (students of chickens and their potential consumers), and with doctors (students of potential victims of radioactive poisoning) is needed. Nor should these evaluators be either directly or indirectly dependent on the producers of the chemicals in question. It is all right for Du Pont and Lederle and the Atomic Energy Commission to maintain their own corps of evaluation scientists, but we should maintain adequate corps of independent investigators. The Bureau of Standards has a small role of this sort, and we saw a few years ago what happened when they made their independent evaluations of "battery additives" and "water purifiers." Such studies should be greatly multiplied, given teeth, and given the respect and support of the community.

I would like to see this whole problem much more widely aired than it has been.

PHILIP R. WHITE

Roscoe B. Jackson Memorial
Laboratory, Bar Harbor, Maine

Meetings

Esperantist Congress

The 44th annual international congress of Esperantists was held in Warsaw, Poland, 1-8 Aug. 1959. In attendance were 3254 members from many parts of the world, representing 43 nations. The invitation to convene in Warsaw, presented by the Polish Parliament to the 43rd such congress in Mainz, Germany, had been accepted as particularly appropriate because 1959 is the centenary of the birth of L. L. Zamenhof, who was born in Poland and who published from Warsaw his pamphlet presenting the international language which became known as Esperanto.

The opening session was officially welcomed by the vice chief minister of Poland. The Polish Government issued two postage stamps commemorating the congress. Among meetings held in connection with the regular sessions of the congress was that of the Internacia Scienca Asocio Esperantista (now more than 50 years old), 46 members being present from 18 countries. At the institute called Somera (summer) Universitato, the following scientific subjects were discussed: the international organization of the struggle against hunger (Paul Neergard, director of Denmark's pathology service); the centenary of spectroanalysis in 1959 (Hugo Sirk, Vienna); possibilities and difficulties for interplanetary travel (B. Popović, Sarajevo); the centennial of evolution (Andreo Grebecki, Warsaw); and practical applications of sex diagnosis in cells (Giorgio Canuto, Turin). These, like all proceedings of the congress itself, were presented in Esperanto without translation.

The invitation from the city of Brussels that the congress meet there in August 1960 was accepted. Invitations for 1961 and 1962 were received from Madrid and from Zurich, respectively. Japan has asked to be host to the 1965 congress.

IVY KELLERMAN REED

La Jolla, California

Forthcoming Events

March

24-25. Geological Soc. of America, Lexington, Ky. (T. G. Roberts, Dept. of Geology, Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington.)

24-26. American Assoc. for the History of Medicine, Charleston, S.C. (J. B. Blake, c/o Smithsonian Institution, Washington 25.)

24-26. Aviation Education, 4th natl. conf., Denver, Colo. (W. Kinkley, Superintendent of Schools, Aurora, Colo.)