

Book Reviews

The Poisons in Your Food. William Longgood. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1960. 277 pp. \$3.95.

This book is an all-time high in "bloodthirsty pen-pushing." It deals with the important problem of chemical additives but from the bias of the nonscientific, natural food-organic gardening cult—the followers of J. I. Rodale (publisher of *Organic Gardening and Farming*, *Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening*, and so forth), of Natural Food Associates, Inc. (publishers of *Natural Food and Farming Digest*), and others of the same convictions. Most of the "authorities" named in the book are the cult leaders, their gods, or a few true scientists whose work or expressions have been taken either out of context or out of time and used in such manner that they seem to support the doctrine of the believers. The quoted voices of authority and knowledge on the "scientific facts" include *Time*, *Police Gazette*, *Prevention*, and the Bonn correspondent of the *Economist*. The book is an irresponsible bid for wide sales through sensationalism. Indeed, one of the author's own definitions describes well my appraisal of it: "[an effort to] beguile, deceive and defraud the housewife by making her think she is getting something she isn't."

The muckraking in this book employs all well-known methods of the irresponsible purveyors of the sensational. Expenditures for life and hospital insurance, for aspirin, and for medical care are cited as indicating a damaging effect of chemicals in foods! The reader is told that "... the nation's health is steadily deteriorating." He also learns that "natural foods ... have a delicate chemical balance that was established by nature for a purpose. These naturally occurring chemicals exist in their specific proportion for a specific purpose. ... If a larger or smaller quantity were desirable, the amount established by nature through the evolutionary proc-

ess would have been larger or smaller." The author repeatedly implies that scientists, whose uncited evidence disagrees with his views, have either been bought off by industry or by government, or that they may be deliberately prejudicing their work and reports because their university receives funds from the Public Health Service or from industry, or even because the scientist hopes that after retirement he may be able to get an industrial job!

The author's fascination with the cult of "natural" versus "synthetic and artificial" is well revealed in his presentation concerning meat. The average steak or roast, he writes, "probably comes from a cow born through artificial insemination, raised with an artificial sex hormone implant in its ear, fed synthetic sex hormones, ... slaughtered—generally by an inhumane method—and sold as meat." In his association through name-calling, he reaches a high in stating that "possible sexual repercussions" on human beings have been commented on by "Dr. Christian Hamburger of Copenhagen, who helped the ex-G.I., George Jorgensen of New York become 'Christine' and Charles McLeod of New Orleans convert to 'Charlotte'." The device of conjuring up fears of impotence or of feminizing influences is an age-old one for those wishing to oppose science. Among primitive peoples, this device is often employed by the witch doctor to oppose the introduction of effective scientific control or treatment of disease.

Longgood's book will no doubt be welcomed by those who believe with him that the public is the victim of a giant conspiracy joined in by the Food and Drug Administration, the American Medical Association, the "big chemical companies" and, apparently, scientists in general—a charge so ridiculous that it deserves only to be ignored. Longgood's book will readily be recognized for what it is by one scientist with so

little to do that he takes time to read it.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the great mass of the American public is sufficiently intelligent and logical to recognize that writers and publishers sometimes fail in their responsibility to provide factual and objective information on important issues of the day despite the availability of authoritative, considered source material from organizations such as the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization of the United Nations (WHO), the Food Protection Committee of the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council (FPC), the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other responsible bodies.

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The Genetic Basis of Selection. I. Michael Lerner. Wiley, New York, 1958. xvi + 298 pp. Illus. \$8.

This is Lerner's third book on selection and animal breeding. The first, *Population Genetics and Animal Improvement* (1950), was a conventional treatment of the theory and practice of selection for improved performance in livestock. The second, *Genetic Homeostasis* (1954), was concerned with genetic systems that are refractive to directional selection; it was speculative, imaginative, controversial, and influential. The four year periodicity is maintained with this 1958 volume, whose subject content is much like the first, though with overtones from the second.

The book begins with a general review of population genetics and the inheritance of quantitative traits. There is some discussion of natural selection and evolution, but the main emphasis is on the special opportunities for selection which are available to the animal breeder, such things as progeny or family selection, selection indices, inbreeding and crossing, selection for combining ability, and the eventual hope for some utilization of asexual propagation. There is a full, but (necessarily) inconclusive, discussion of the relative merits of intra-group selection and selection for combining ability in crosses.

Both theory and empirical results are included, the latter drawn largely from the author's wide experience with poul-