

# Book Reviews

## History of the AMA as a Professional Organization

**AMA: The Voice of American Medicine.** James G. Burrow. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Md., 1963. xii + 430 pp. \$7.50.

This is a disinterested and perceptive history of the American Medical Association. That the meticulously documented facts are the result of extensive research is made evident by the wealth of references. The book is interesting and well written. Its mood is gently tolerant of rather serious lapses from altruism and warmly appreciative of high-minded and idealistic activities. As the story of the AMA unfolds Burrow illuminates it with brief comments on the contemporary historical background; these comments are entertaining and give depth to the main themes. The evolution of the AMA during the past 100 years to its present powerful role deserves the scholarly scrutiny of a professional historian; this volume offers such a scrutiny.

The AMA was organized in 1847 with the primary goal of improving medical education. Its struggle to achieve this goal was steady but relatively unsuccessful until after the turn of the century. The schools were mainly proprietary apprentice shops run by successful practitioners who fought any type of control that interfered with their profits. The sad state of even the best of their schools was indicated by the response which the medical director of the Harvard Medical School made to Charles Eliot's suggestion that there be written examinations for the medical degree. The director refused because "a majority of the students could hardly write." The Council of Medical Education was established in 1904 and "despite formidable obstructions" could "report substantial gains" by 1910. At that time it cooperated actively with Abraham Flexner, whose report for the Carnegie Foundation was the major force in turning the tide toward the high standards that

have placed medical education in this country in a unique position of superior academic quality.

The second major advance in this field (unfortunately not discussed in this volume or in Fishbein's *History of the American Medical Association*) was the establishment of full-time faculties with academic status in the clinical departments. This crucial step was taken a few years after the Flexner report was published. Unfortunately, the AMA varied from a position of no support to one of active opposition, in sharp contrast to the ideals that motivated its establishment in 1847. However, despite the AMA's lack of enthusiasm, the value of full-time clinical faculties is now almost universally accepted, and the members of the AMA have been notably among the beneficiaries.

The fight by the AMA against nostrums and quackery has been courageous and dramatic: "Into the darkest recesses of the nostrum industry the association probed, never hesitating to reveal the most sordid aspects of the business. No other organization of the nation after 1906 remotely rivaled the AMA in exposing the graft and ravages of the nostrum vendors." The association risked law suits and libel charges and spent thousands of dollars in this struggle (the Wine of Cardui suit alone cost \$125,000). One of the most disgraceful stories of Washington politics can be told about the lobbying activities carried on by drug manufacturers and advertisers as they successfully suppressed legislation that would have protected the public against dangerous or inefficient drugs and against claims of curative powers that were bald lies. Only after 73 people had died as a result of using an untested sulfa drug was Congress (in 1938) able to defy the lobbyists and pass a law that came near to coping with the dangers.

One of the AMA's finest activities, in

quality, effectiveness, and altruism, was the establishing of the Council of Pharmacy and Chemistry in 1905. The Council studied and reported on the safety and effectiveness of drugs, set standards, and was a guide to therapy for any physician who would read the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Through this council rotated many outstanding men in American medicine, to the immense credit of the Association.

As Burrow recounts the increasing participation of the AMA in political problems, his objectivity and indeed generous tolerance do not soften the unhappy picture of an increasing domination of the AMA by reactionary men whose success was more often in medical politics than in medical science. That the progressive spirit was laudably active through the first two decades of this century is evident in the Association's efforts to establish a national department of health, to improve federal vital statistics, to fight for federal food and drug legislation, and even to discuss compulsory health insurance with little prejudice. "But the AMA soon adjusted to the extreme caution and complacency of the 1920's. Not only did it attack forces on the left with a total repudiation of compulsory health insurance . . . but found no justification of the government's policy of allowing federal assistance to the states for infant and maternal welfare benefits." The lowest point in this departure from the earlier open-mindedness appeared when the House of Delegates joined the McCarthy bandwagon by urging a congressional investigation of the nation's schools to uncover "teachers and authors of textbooks" undermining "free enterprise." Shortly thereafter the delegates, in similar mood, voted support of the Bricker Amendment.

Nothing in this history helps one to understand the original opposition (rescinded much later) to group practice, which is a logical and effective response to the complexities of modern medicine, from both a scientific and an economic point of view. Equally surprising was the long delay in approving voluntary health insurance.

During the late 1940's the AMA supported the valuable Hill-Burton bill for hospital construction but successfully fought federal aid to medical education, maternal and child health support, and the establishment of a cabinet post of health, education, and

security. Growing suspicion of danger in almost any type of federal assistance seems to have inhibited the experimental attitude that one would expect in a scientific organization. No one wishes to be controlled by a bureaucracy, but there were many instances where vigilant acceptance would have been better than total rejection. It is interesting to note that in recent years, the budgets of medical schools have been sustained to a very large degree by federal grants but that there has been no appreciable interference with educational policy or research programs.

Burrow gives relatively large space to the struggle against compulsory health insurance. He reveals the struggle within the Association and gives examples of the bitter distortions that damaged the image of the AMA with both the medical profession and the public. The author speaks of "the association's somewhat exaggerated suspicion of innovations" and quotes the early warning of the Council on Health and Public Instruction (of the AMA): "Blind opposition, indignant repudiation and bitter denunciation is worse than useless; it leads nowhere and it leaves the profession in a position of helplessness if the rising tide of social development sweeps over them."

The author closes his discussion of this complicated problem astutely and tolerantly: "While the Association had strengthened the democratic process by retarding the nation's drift toward a comprehensive program of medical care that had no convincing popular mandate, it had failed to provide the electorate with adequate information so essential to the formulation of national policy. By publishing distorted accounts of deficiencies in the operation of compulsory systems abroad, it stood in danger of ultimately damaging its own cause: in finding behind much of the legislation it opposed the spectre of 'socialized medicine', it resorted to a use of loose terminology that stood in sharp contrast to its insistence on clarity of language in the drafting of federal legislation."

This unemotional appraisal is quite different from Morris Fishbein's bitter charge (in 1936) that opposition lay "among the 10 percent of our people who, because of ignorance, stupidity or prejudice, prefer the byways of charlatanism and faith healing."

The AMA has been a strong and effective force for good; it deserves

so much credit for highminded leadership that many of its members and its friends are saddened when it uses some of the worst methods of politics as its responsibilities require it to enter the political arena.

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## National Conservation Policy

**Federal Conservation Policy, 1921-1933.** Donald C. Swain. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1963. 221 pp. Illus. Paper, \$4.

It is generally believed that federal interest in the conservation of natural resources sank out of sight in the interval between Roosevelts I and II. But I recall that, during an otherwise not especially edifying talk with the then Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, he told me that he had gone over the documents of the Pinchot-Ballinger controversy and that, to his surprise, he had found Ballinger was in the right. To what extent the Terrible-Tempered Mr. Bang was swayed by the historic conflict between Agriculture and Interior, I cannot say.

Be that as it may, Donald C. Swain has justified, in a workmanlike manner, his final sentences: "Contrary to widely held opinion, the national conservation program did not deteriorate in the 1920's. It expanded and matured." His bibliography and acknowledgments give impressive support to the analysis in the text of his nine chapters. Seven of these chapters deal with the commonly recognized types of natural resource. Bracketing these seven are the first, a brief but useful survey of the conservation movement, and the last, "Prelude to the New Deal," which gives tardy and deserved credit to Herbert Hoover.

The gist of Swain's argument, and of his evidence, is that the several official resource agencies, whether inaugurated or encouraged during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt, carried on effectively during the following two decades. Although not all were equally aggressive, the net effect was one of substantial accomplishment.

What might be described as background music, or, to use the current fashion, "noise," were important differences in political and social philosophy. One of these involved federal versus

state control, the latter at times shading off into reliance upon the entrepreneur. The other, especially dramatized in the conflict between Gifford Pinchot and Steven Mather, was the issue of the utilitarian versus the esthetic view of land use and management. Curious as it may seem, there is more than a hint that, as a matter of long-range economics, the esthetic view is the sounder guide. But if one reflects on the fact that the patterns of resource use are essentially problems in design, to be guided by scientific knowledge as well as taste, rather than by immediate self-interest, the paradox withers.

One of the conventions of the business requires a reviewer to establish his good faith by noting a few flaws in any book that he admires. The author might have shown the connection between overprotection of the Kaibab deer herd and his discussion of predator control. He might also have noted instances of overpromotion in the field of irrigation. And it would have been helpful to point out that problems have arisen because, in civil matters, the Corps of Engineers is more directly responsible to the legislature than to its commander-in-chief.

But these are minor items. I for one am extremely grateful to Donald Swain for his labor. There is, by the way, a good index.

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## Behavioral Science

**The Behaviour of Domestic Animals.** E. S. E. Hafez, Ed. Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore, Md., 1962. xiv + 619 pp. Illus. \$14.50.

This book consists of 19 chapters, organized into four parts, and an epilogue. Part 1, Behaviour and Domestication, consists of two chapters: "Introduction to animal behaviour," by J. P. Scott, and "Domestication and the evolution of behaviour," by E. B. Hale. Part 2, Fundamentals of Behaviour, consists of seven chapters: "The genetics of behaviour," by J. L. Fuller; "The physical environment and behaviour," by M. W. Schein; "The social environment and behaviour," by A. M. Guhl; "The effects of early experience," by V. H. Denenberg; "Physiological mechanisms and behaviour patterns," by J. I.