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## THE FUTURE OF ARID LANDS

A symposium volume of the  
American Association for the  
Advancement of Science

Edited by Gilbert F. White  
Department of Geography,  
University of Chicago

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The volume presents the efforts of scientists from 17 countries and from as many disciplines to assess the state of man's struggle to make productive and stable use of the world's arid lands.

It contains the papers and recommendations of the International Arid Lands Symposium and Conference, Albuquerque and Socorro, New Mexico, April and May 1955.

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## Letters

### Under Secretary of Commerce for Transportation

In your issue of 26 December 1958 there is an editorial concerning the report of the Bureau of Standards on a battery additive. Referring to a resolution introduced by Representative John J. Allen, Jr., of California, now Under Secretary of Commerce for Transportation, the editorial notes that if Allen's appointment is confirmed he "will be in a sense in the unusual position of being simultaneously plaintiff and defendant."

In fairness to Under Secretary Allen, you should know that his duties as Under Secretary of Commerce for Transportation do not include supervision of the Bureau of Standards. Allen's statement on behalf of the resolution which he introduced in 1957 reads, in part, as follows:

"Under the circumstances, and without having any opinion as to the merits of the further claims of the claimants nor the amount thereof, I felt that the claimants should have a day in court in which they could be fully heard . . ."

It might also interest you to know that in March of 1953 when the director of the Bureau of Standards, Allen V. Astin, had been requested to resign because of his findings in the case of the Battery Additive AD-X2, I intervened with Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks in Astin's behalf and the Secretary reversed the position which had been taken by the department with respect to Astin.

LEWIS STRAUSS

U.S. Department of Commerce,  
Washington, D.C.

I am glad to have the record set straight. When I was checking on the facts for the editorial, I telephoned the public information office of the Department of Commerce and the White House news office. In both instances, I asked whether it was true that the President had announced his intention to appoint John J. Allen, Jr., to the post of Under Secretary of Commerce; the reply from each was, "Yes." Since neither office knew to what use I wished to put the information, it is understandable that they did not give the full title.—G. DuS.

### History of Public Health

My attention has been called to a review of my book, *A History of Public Health*, in *Science* [128, 1080 (1958)]. While the lengthy review by Leland W. Parr is highly complimentary, it does contain a specific misstatement of fact that I wish to correct, as well as a comment that should be placed in proper

perspective in order to guard against misinterpretation.

Parr's statement that I make no mention of toxoid is untrue. He refers specifically to diphtheria, and how he could have missed this is not clear to me. The development of diphtheria immunization is discussed on pages 336 to 338. On page 337, after mention of Ramon's development of anatoxin (toxoid), there is a specific statement that "later, alum-precipitated toxoid was found to have still greater antigenic potency." Discussion of the application and consequences of preventive immunization in diphtheria follow. Diphtheria is used as an example of the consequences of the bacteriological discoveries.

The second item concerns Table III, a listing of certain disease organisms discovered between 1880 and 1898. Parr comments: "I do not see why the anthrax bacillus (1876, Koch) was not included, since it was in a way the fuse that touched off the era, and for that matter the gonococcus, the meningococcus, and the organisms that cause whooping cough, tularemia, relapsing fever, and syphilis might well have been included because of their importance." As Parr himself is aware, the table covers only the last two decades of the 19th century and lists organisms discovered during this period. Koch's work on anthrax is considered extensively on pages 312 to 314, immediately preceding Table III. Mention is also made of the gonococcus, which was discovered in 1879, and of the organism of relapsing fever (1868–1873). Within the context, the story is clear to any reader who pays attention to the text, for which the table is only an illustration.

It should be clear that this is a history of community action in the interest of health and not a history of bacteriology and immunology, the latter subject having been dealt with fully by Bulloch. The selection of data will of course differ with the person who writes a book. I believe that the argument of the book, as I have indicated above, is clear enough.

GEORGE ROSEN

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I did not miss Rosen's mention of diphtheria toxoid (page 337)—in fact I underlined it for review comment. I made an unfortunate choice of words in commenting, to which the author rightly objects. My apologies. Rosen did mention diphtheria toxoid as a late development in the fight against diphtheria described. This fight was, however, a campaign in which diphtheria toxin-antitoxin was utilized almost entirely. Toxoid did not replace toxin-antitoxin mixture until somewhat later.

I meant to indicate my regret that the author had not discussed toxoids and, in