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9 JULY 1971

were far from compelling, but they did indeed point to a toxic conversion quite analogous to that described in the recent report. Neither bacteriophages, nor their fascinating attributes of transduction or lysogenic conversion had yet been discovered; nor had toxins been purified. He may be forgiven for the naive speculation that the toxin itself was the active agent.

As far as I am aware, Sanfelice's experiment was never subjected to further verification, and it thus played no part in the further history of bacterial genetics. However, it was conceptually similar to the pneumococcus transformation, reported by Griffith 35 years later (a latent period familiar to geneticists). It is now a reasonable surmise that his observations were correct.

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

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Stanford, California 94305*

Reference

1. F. Sanfelice, *Z. Hyg. Infektionskr.* **14**, 339 (1893).

Nomenclative Etiquette

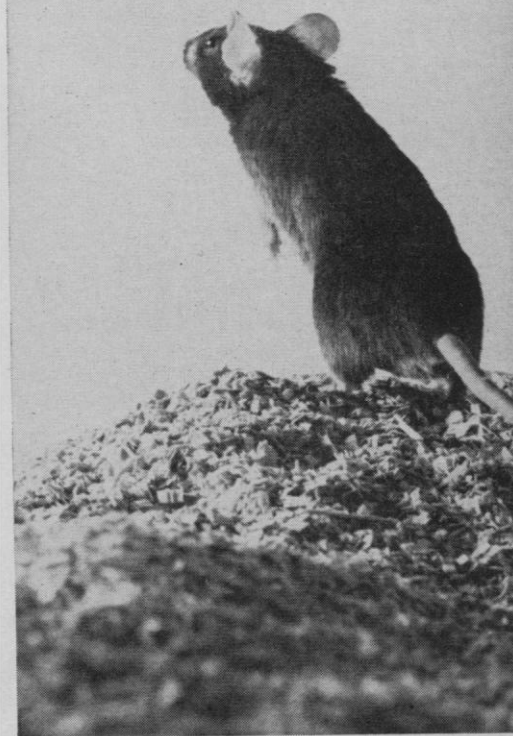
Plumb suggests (Letters, 19 Feb.) the suppression of the term centigrade so that "at some time in the future, degrees Celsius will be a natural expression." Why? Degrees centigrade is already a "natural expression" which furthermore describes the system as one of 100 degrees between reference points. Not so long ago, a perfectly understandable unit like cycles per second was changed to hertz, and spectroscopists are now forced to use nanometers when everyone has always understood millimicrons. Furthermore, I challenge anyone to demonstrate how "torr" is any more understandable than "mm-Hg." All this useless arbitrary pedantry torr my heart out. It hertz so much it gave me a fever, which steadfastly, I shall always measure in degrees centigrade.

BARRY M. AUSTERN

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It is not hard to understand why the medical people are switching to centigrade degrees rather than to Celsius. For centuries the doctors suffered under eponymic names: Prowazek-Greeff bodies (trachoma bodies), the Achard-Castaigne test (methylene blue),

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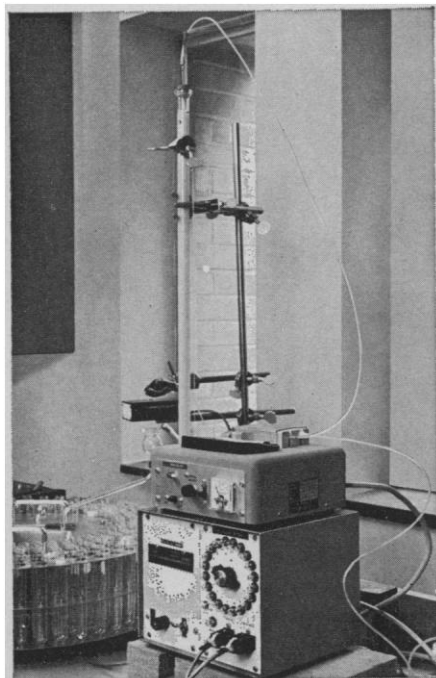
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*U.S. Patent No. 3,256,857.

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Vleminckx solution (sulfurated lime), the Vicq d'Azyr bundle (thalamo-mammillary), the Minkowski-Chauffard syndrome (hemolytic jaundice), Higménakis's sign (clavicular), von-Recklinghausen-Appelbaum disease (hemochromatosis), and so on *ad nauseam*. At length they decided that this flagellation had gone on long enough, and that thenceforth they would use descriptive names, like centigrade, wherever possible. So at least the doctors are coming down to earth, and I profoundly hope that our editors will come along with them. . . . I wish the Emily Posts of nomenclature etiquette could realize, at long last, that the intelligent way to honor the memory of Celsius—a champion of sound common sense—is to leave his sensible temperature scale with the sensible name that he gave it.

D. A. Ross

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Peer Review System

One of this country's most successful collaborative operations which links the entire health-oriented scientific community to the federal government, namely the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation's system of research grant evaluation by peer review, is now undergoing serious attacks and is in danger of dissolution.

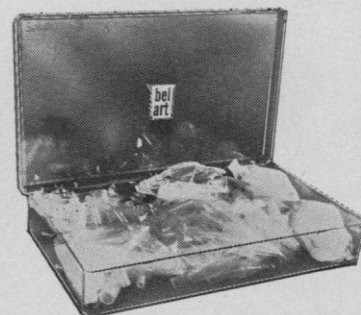
Opponents of the peer review system argue that the larger, better staffed and equipped universities and research institutions are more successful in the competition than are the smaller less distinguished ones, and that there is considerable geographic imbalance in distribution of research funds. This is not a valid argument against the present national competitive system if our goal remains high-quality scientific achievement, since much of the most imaginative and high-quality research is coming from the established institutions. It is an argument, however, for providing institutional funds for universities in less populated areas so that they may attract high-quality teaching faculty and build their resources. Grants of this nature have been provided in the recent past by the National Science Foundation, and it is to be hoped that this type of support will be continued, but not substituted for the present system.

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