Editorial

Dogs and the Search for Health

In midsummer the binary Dog Star, Sirius, the most brilliant star in the Canis Major constellation, rises in conjunction with the sun. It is fitting, therefore, during these "dog days" to mention the important role played by dogs in the research laboratory and recurrent crises related to threats to the freedom of research in which these animals are used.

This year the U. S. Congress has had on its docket animal-research legislation concerning which the medical profession, biologists, and indeed scientists in general, as well as leaders in community affairs, must have had interest. Rational information could be obtained from the National Society for Medical Research and in the Bulletin of that organization. The January-February issue of the latter presented an editorial entitled, "Advancing Laboratory Animal Care Without Sacrificing Human Health and Welfare";\(^1\) an article "Unlock the Doors" (giving an account of the success of an open-door policy to the public in regard to laboratory work on animals);\(^2\) and a reprint of a frank and salty appraisal of the antivivisection movement by the late Dr. A. J. Carlson.\(^3\) The accomplishments of Carlson and those who preceded him—for example, Cannon and Welch—in the maintenance of sound, nonrestricted animal research may be all too readily forgotten. Welch, incidentally, as told by Fleming,\(^4\) was against the formal organization of a contra-antivivisection group, believing it would unduly dignify the obstructionist group. He thought that in his time it would be more effective to explain the motivations and rewards of scientific inquiry to persons of influence, in which role Welch apparently performed most ably.

Dr. Maurice B. Visscher, current president of the National Society for Medical Research (NSMR), in a special report printed in Modern Medicine,\(^5\) gave the background for the current proposed legislation and the philosophy of men of reason of the past who worked with animals, and he emphasizes the point that the NSMR acknowledged two types of legislation as consonant with the public interest: (1) that related to the procurement of animals for research and education; and (2) that related to appropriate mechanisms for establishing and enforcing standards for the housing and care of animals. The American Heart Association sent copies of Visscher's communication to members of its councils, with other information which emphasized the dangers of some of the proposed bills and provided a background for specific recommendations to representatives in Congress.

Cardiologists owe a special debt to experimentalists, for traditionally the basis for their claims to understanding the mysteries of the circulation go back to Harvey. There will always be a trend for the practitioner to return to some type of sheer Galenism, an atavistic regression which can be thwarted only by our awareness of our indebtedness...
to laboratory investigators. We should remember the tribulations of the gentle William Maddock Bayliss, who in the course of scientific integrity initiated a slander suit against his traducer and won a judgment. The cardiologist may be aware also of the inane charges that Augustus Waller’s pet bulldog, Jimmie (famous because of the horizontal axis of his heart as compared to Einthoven’s “long dogs”), was tortured when his feet were placed in jars of salt water from which wires went to a galvanometer.

The physician should remember his debt to the laboratory investigator, and both should never lose their awareness of the sentiments of the population at large toward animals and toward dogs in particular. No responsible investigator discounts the depth of feeling a person may have for a dog, whether pet, guardian, seeing-eye, bench, or field champion—or indeed, in the case of the last, the actual worth of the animal on the open market. Young investigators benefit from reading John Brown’s Rab and His Friends, and should remember the number of heads of states who have had a trusted companion in the form of a dog. Claude Bernard has said something like this: the fruits of one’s work enjoyed in a beautiful dining room can be obtained only by an approach through a messy kitchen. Nowadays, kitchens are usually something to be proud of, and laboratories should be no less. I believe it was Louis Agassiz who said, “I feel more vexed at impropriety in a laboratory than in a church. The study of nature is intercourse with the highest mind.” Certainly the laboratory is no place for one who would espouse the ancient theories of Descartes concerning absence of conscious pain in animals. Even as a master potter has a tidy wheel and a clean floor in the creation of his work, so the investigator in the creation of an ever-changing body of knowledge may have a tidy laboratory.

Open criticism of the design of animal experiment including reasons for the choice of dogs if such were used, in a biology meeting should not be constrained, though theoretically it could lead to abuse in the form of sensation-
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It is to be hoped that the *august* assembly of legislators in Washington will have listened patiently and inquiringly to the opinions of the NSMR as those opinions relate to animal-research legislation, and that the seeming rashness, if not indeed the touch of madness, present in some of the proposed legislation, will have been exorcised before these canicular days have started. The humane scientific viewpoint has been articulatedly expressed by the Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine,\(^1\) and it is hoped that their report was widely distributed to legislators. The cooperative attitude of scientists expressed through the NSMR\(^2\) is set forth thus: "The scientific community in the United States invites the members of Congress to learn at first hand by visits to laboratories what actually goes on, and why." Possibly also cardiologists, remembering their debts to the animal laboratory, will wish to know more of the work of the National Society for Medical Research and support its objectives.

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5. **Visscher, M. B.:** The 1966 threat to medical progress. Mod Med 34: 87; 90; 252; 256; 258, 1966.
12. **National Society for Medical Research:** An Analysis of HR 10049 and Its Identical Counterparts: HR 10050, HR 10213, HR 10355, HR 10589, HR 10620 and S 2576. Washington, D.C., National Society for Medical Research.

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