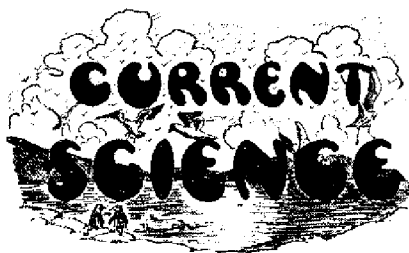


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A. V. Sankaran lives at No. 10, P and T Colony, I Cross, II Block, RT Nagar, Bangalore 560 032, India
e-mail: sankaran@bgl.vsnl.net.in

FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Science and the Censor

Scientists in general and physicians in particular will be disturbed by the correspondence which has passed between the postal censor and Dr. J. McKeen Cattell, Editor of *Science*, and which appears in the current issue of that Journal. That censorship in war is necessary no one will deny. But was the censor justified in deleting from *Science* an item on a new sulfa drug which can be used with good effect in such intestinal infections as dysentery, because our enemies in tropical regions might learn how to return the afflicted men rapidly to the fighting line? From time immemorial military surgeons

have made no distinction between friend and foe in dealing with wounds and disease. In 1917 both the Surgeon-General of the Army and the Secretary of War decided that for humanitarian reasons publication of information about an antitoxin developed in this country to combat the bacillus of gas-gangrene, then highly destructive on the Western Front, was permissible. Thousands are now dying of typhus in occupied Middle Europe, but if the censor has his way they cannot be saved by the dissemination of any new knowledge acquired here.

We detect no such narrowness of view in the few German medical and scientific publications that have reached this office since the attack on Pearl Harbor, nor in the pages of *Nature*, which is apparently permitted to exercise its discretion and which prints communications of the very type that have been expunged from *Science*. The censor was certainly on slippery ground when he deleted references to indium because that metal can provide a satisfactory lining for shaving-cream and tooth-paste tubes. The Germans know as much about indium as we. So with the suppression of an item on a method of

spraying walls of mines to prevent mercury poisoning. Some of the material to which the censor objected in the case of *Science* had been published in newspapers from Maine to California, so that nothing whatever was gained by deletion. To make matters worse, there is no appeal from this decision.

Probably Dr. Cattell is right in holding that the editors of scientific periodicals are better judges of what may or may not be of value to the enemy than technically incompetent postal authorities. If the policy to which he objects is carried out consistently, new scientific books and periodicals must be suppressed. Astrophysicists, biologists, plant and animal breeders, organic chemists who are trying to isolate vitamins and hormones, designers of new electron microscopes, inventors of materials that will resist fire, mathematicians who devise techniques that can be applied in solving the problems of designing engineers—all make discoveries that have some application in totalitarian war.

—The New York Times