

Book Reviews

Gregory Higby who has written the history of the pharmacopeia to 1900 gives a succinct account of pre-pharmacopeial literature in America and events leading to the first edition of 1820. It is worth noting that a more detailed account of this period is given by Glenn Sonnedecker in three articles published in *Pharmacy in History* (1993–4) and reprinted by the U.S.P. to coincide with the publication of this book.

The work for the pharmacopeia was carried out by a Committee of the Philadelphia College of Physicians until after the Civil War when there were calls for reform. The American Medical Association rejected a suggestion by Edward Squibb that it become responsible for the work. The American Pharmaceutical Association took up the challenge and under the leadership of Charles Rice, Chief Pharmacist to the Bellvue Hospital, New York, transformed the revision process into a nation-wide project.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the U.S.P. acquired legal status by being included in state laws. In 1906, at the time its authority was enhanced with the passing of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, the work was still geared to the practising pharmacist but the expanding pharmaceutical industry and the mass production of biologicals, synthetic drugs and new dosage forms such as the compressed tablet raised urgent questions regarding the purpose of the pharmacopeia. What had hitherto been regarded as a guide to contemporary drug therapy was becoming a source of enforceable drug standards. Lee Anderson, who has specialized in the history of health care in the United States, has written the account of the complex problems and the pressures facing the pharmacopeial committees from 1900 to the present.

In 1970 the scientific director of the British Pharmacopoeia Commission observed "The publication of a new edition of the United States Pharmacopeia is always an event of great importance". The administration and discussions leading to this success are detailed in this history which gives a clear indication of

the problems involved in determining the direction and scope of the pharmacopeia. Unfortunately it lacks detail of the contents of the revisions and the scientific work leading to procedures for quality control. The problem for the reader interested in the timing and nature of change is exacerbated by the index, which, like the text, gives greater prominence to administration and organization. The 12th revision (1942) saw the introduction of the first official injections and compressed tablets. This major innovation is only briefly mentioned in the text and neither tablets nor injections are listed in the index. In the 18th revision (1970) the U.S.P. took the lead in the development of standards for microbial contamination of non-sterile products. The subject has just one paragraph devoted to it and no reference in the index either to the problem or to the U.S.P. Advisory Panel on Sterilization that worked on it.

M P Earles, Eltham, London

Thomas N Burg, "*Sieches Volk macht siechen Staat*". *Arzt, Stand und Staat im 19. Jahrhundert*, Vienna, Edition Praesens, 1994, pp. 150, DM 37.00 (3–901126–26–0).

This short study of the medical profession and public health administration in nineteenth-century Austria starts with a view on the present. The introductory part chiefly discusses Ivan Illich's critique of modern medicine, particularly the theme of medicine's tendency to monopolize and control health matters at the cost of the patient's autonomy. Burg seeks the historical roots for this in the professionalization and "scientification" of medicine in the previous century. While the anatomo-clinical gaze (in the sense of Michel Foucault) is rather briefly illustrated, among others with Carl von Rokitansky's pathological anatomy, aspects of the professionalization of doctors are the author's main topic.

Burg looks into the various suggestions and (largely failing) efforts to reform Austrian

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health administration and legislation between 1770 and 1870, drawing attention simultaneously to the interests of both the state and the nascent medical profession in this area. As for the state, he sees an interest in health care and control with the aim of increasing economic, political, and military power in the tradition of Enlightenment cameralism. As for the doctors, he develops the thesis that their involvement in sanitary reform was a strategy to acquire state-sanctioned professional autonomy and the status of sole experts in questions of health. Accordingly, several issues relevant to medical professionalization are highlighted: the competition by non-academic healers (so-called *Kurpfuscherei*); the problem of fraudulent advertising; the striving for abolition of the dual educational system for surgeons and medical doctors, and the creation of a unified profession, which was eventually achieved with a ministerial decree in 1872 (twenty years later than in Prussia). A link between this so-called “surgeons question” (*Chirurgenfrage*) and Austrian sanitary reform is documented by efforts of organized doctors in the late 1860s to exclude surgeons from admission to public health and forensic services.

Burg's central thesis of a co-operation between the state and the medical profession each to its own benefit—is substantiated from relevant primary sources, such as manuals for public health and medical administration, publications on sanitary reform and policies of doctors' societies, and articles from the early medical periodicals in Austria. His study also provides valuable insights into the responsibilities of Austrian public health officers and sanitary committees at different administrative levels, which extended to general hygiene, action in epidemic and epizootic diseases, and control of health personnel and hospitals. It is therefore a useful contribution both to the historiography of medical professionalization and of public health.

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Susan Wright, *Molecular politics: developing American and British regulatory policy for genetic engineering, 1972–1982*, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. xxii, 591, UK and Eire £59.95 (hardback 0–226–91065–2), £23.95 (paperback 0–226–91066–0); USA \$75.00 and \$29.95; rest of the world \$86.25 and \$34.50.

The first book worth reading on the recombinant DNA debate was June Goodfield's *Playing God* in 1978. Susan Wright, who started research on the matter then, has now produced her retrospective view of what was, lest we forget, an unprecedented episode in the history of modern science. There was, briefly, a pause in research at the behest of the researchers themselves.

Goodfield saw the episode as part of the process of forging a “new social contract” between science and society. Wright, whose title describes her exhaustively detailed book precisely, interprets it in terms of competing discourses tied to the interests of different groups in a complex policy arena. Her interest is in explaining why the debate was so short-lived. A process which could have raised large questions about the goals and direction of biological science was instead confined largely to technical questions about potential hazards. And it rapidly switched from an insistence that the prerequisite for allowing continued use of gene-splicing techniques was defining how they might be applied safely, to an assumption that the hazards were largely illusory and the problems mainly political and presentational.

So much we have read before, in accounts of U.S. policy from Sheldon Krimsky and others and of British policy from David Bennett and his colleagues. Wright goes further, offering a rigorously worked through comparison of the two countries, covering a longer period, and putting the recombinant DNA discussion in the context of post-war science policy making. The result is an important portrait of how the impulse to safeguard scientific autonomy combined with concerns about national technological competitiveness to bring about