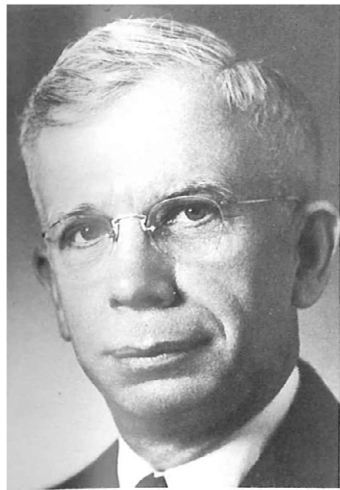


## Editorial

# A Perspective

JAMES G. HORSFALL

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven



*Plant Disease Reporter* is dead! Long live *Plant Disease*! I am delighted that our Society is salvaging *PDR*, because for decades we have needed an outlet for our useful research, an outlet provided, in part, by the old *PDR*.

Recently, when asked to phrase my philosophy of science, I wrote, "My philosophy is to dig new knowledge from the face of the mine and convert it to fuel to power the body politic that provides my groceries." After I had mailed it, I thought, "Why, that is not

just my philosophy; it is the philosophy of the whole of plant pathology." That is precisely how we look at the world. We aim to understand plant diseases (the science) on the one hand and to use our knowledge to combat the plant diseases that destroy our crops (the art) on the other hand.

The late, great E. C. Stakman once wrote, "For better or worse, plant pathology had its origin in fields and granaries more than in the halls of ivy. Society needed agriculture, and agriculture needed plant pathology." Norman Borlaug phrased it more pithily. "Our research," said he, "must be good, but it must be good for something."

We three were really only repeating a century-old dictum enunciated by Samuel W. Johnson, who founded the first agricultural experiment station in America. He wrote that theory and practice must march together.

The two did march together in the first 45 volumes or so of our journal. We published theoretical and practical papers side by side.

But then a subtle change set in. Pure research became the stuff of status. Useful research was pushed down in the snob scale. By 1963, our distinguished member J. C. Walker, who could do both theoretical and useful research, became worried and was compelled to write, "What I am concerned about is that these 'specialty' groups will lose plant pathology. There is real danger of being cut off in space without a landing gear." By 1965, the industry and extension members of our Society carried to the Miami meetings a well-thought-out statement that there was so little of use in the journal they were wasting their dues. Some considered resigning.

And by 1969, I was moved to ask at the Spokane meetings, "Are we smart outside?" The percentage of papers in *Phytopathology* with even a small component of field research had fallen from 65 to 18% in 20 yr. By 1979, however, we showed signs of being smart outside again. I am pleased that we are

launching what will be a new journal for us, a journal that will take care of our useful science.

We won't become really smart outside, however, until the peers preening themselves in academe and far from farmers fields will give as much tenure credit to those who do the research that buys our groceries as to those on the pure science pedestal whose groceries must be handed up to them.

On the other hand, I hope the Editor of the new journal will not kill off a submitted paper because some inept reviewer says, "It is not scientific enough." I hope the Editor will remember the words of St. Paul when he stood on Mars Hill: "Ye men of Athens. In all things, ye are too scientific."

We need a place in our publication scheme for an observation such as "The test fungicide I put into the soil caused nematode eggs to hatch." That simple observation could be just the key someone needs to open the door—to the biochemistry of egg hatching, if you like. Please, reviewers, don't throw such papers out. If someone finds Dutch elm disease in the Galápagos Islands, encourage him to print it in *Plant Disease*. Such field observations often send the basic researchers on their way.

In 1946, *Phytophthora infestans* learned in Florida how to start an epidemic on tomato, not normally a host. By reading *Plant Disease Reporter*, we followed the epidemic as it marched up the East Coast that year. Let *Plant Disease* be truly a disease-reporting journal. Who knows; it might sell more of the advertisers' products!

Now that we have decided to print two journals instead of one, let us be sure they operate on somewhat different policies. Otherwise, we might as well publish only one. Presumably, the Council has decided to operate the new one as an outlet for our useful research that pays for our groceries.

*Phytopathology* operates by peer review, a system that is undergoing intense criticism in some quarters 1) because it runs afoul of the principle of territorial imperative and 2) because it tends to operate in the middle range of quality. Committees can seldom agree on a dramatic new departure in thinking. Someone once said that the Mona Lisa was not painted by a committee.

Let *Plant Disease* be operated by a judge, not by a jury. Let the Editor and judge be at the top of the scientific hill so that his decisions cannot impede his ascent of that hill.

*Plant Disease*, if you must have reviewers, please don't pick inept ones merely because they will serve, and please set up an appeal system against capricious refusals.

Of course, the article must report new research. Of course, the subject of each sentence must agree with the predicate in number and tense. But above all, let us make the research that goes into *Plant Disease* "good, but good for something." I hope it will enable useful science to march step for step with theoretical science, because plant pathology must have both.

*Plant Disease*, I raise my glass in a toast to you. May you have a long, happy, and productive life. I wish you Good Hunting, Good Luck, and Godspeed!





## PLANT PATHOLOGY HELPS KEEP AMERICA'S FOOD SUPPLY BOUNTIFUL.

The specialized science of plant pathology is vital to the American way of life. The mountain of groceries shown here represents the 5,000 pounds of food that the average family consumes each year. And plant pathology not only helps make such bounty possible, it also makes it more affordable.





In 1951, food ate up 23% of a family's disposable income. Today, food expenses account for only 17%. This lower cost (even in the face of inflation) is based upon higher productivity, and plant disease research has helped to increase the harvest in a variety of food, feed, and fiber crops.

When Americans look at the tape at the check-out counter, or feast their eyes on a bountiful and nourishing meal, they

cannot see the thought and effort, the tests and analyses, the dedication and innovation that helped to make their diet possible in the first place, and economical in the long run.

But we can and do. And we recognize the men and women, scientists and investigators, fieldmen and applicators for their vital contribution to supermarket plenty.

A food poster featuring this photo and emphasizing the importance of scientific crop protection is available for display or meeting use. Contact your DuPont representative or write directly to Agrichemicals Section, Public Affairs Department, DuPont Company, Wilmington, DE 19898.

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