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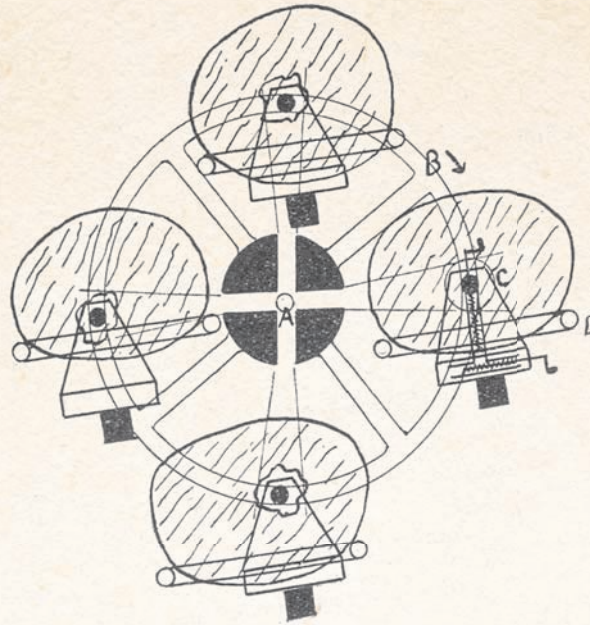
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Highlights from our 1930 archives



A hand-drawn diagram of a proposed apparatus for radium teletherapy, based on the principle of the Ferris wheel, as published in the 19 July 1930 issue.

Chronic poisoning with carbon monoxide

Sir: Some 6 weeks ago I noticed pallor and malaise in a member of my family and about the same time experienced disturbed sleep and severe headache in the small hours of morning.

Both conditions have cleared up since turning off the gas at the meter after supper.

In the *British Medical Journal* received today Sir Bernard Spilsbury describes a similar state of things as occurring in the family of a doctor friend of his.

I suggest that in our search for sources of chronic debility it is well to think of small gas leaks often found about ill-fitting taps of stoves and bath heaters.

*K St Vincent Welch, Wollstonecraft
12 August 1930*

Research and the community

The average member of the community – “the man in the street” – looks upon people engaged in scientific research and even on those who earn their bread and butter by teaching the basal sciences, as somewhat peculiar beings dealing with abstract matters that are not of much use to anybody.

Others attribute to the scientific worker almost supernatural powers in the discovery of the secrets of Nature.

Relatively few people view scientific research in a proper perspective. Unfortunately those who do not understand are the most blatant in the public press and the most noisy on the public rostrum; by their clamorous persistence they carry with them others who will not take the trouble to think for themselves.

At the present time the government of Australia does not devote a great deal of public money to medical research ... it does however make provision for the needs of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the [research done by the CSIR] to Australia and its primary industries; for the readers of a scientific journal it is not necessary to make the attempt.

There would be no necessity to refer to the subject were it not that one section of the daily press has brought forward the suggestion that,

owing to the present state of financial depression, the activities of the CSIR should be suspended.

The present government of the Commonwealth is fully alive to the value of the work of the CSIR and has no intention of interfering with it.

Governments, however, sometimes feel themselves compelled to heed a popular outcry and herein lies the danger at the present time.

The situation may be met only by creating a body of public opinion, educated to a proper appreciation of the difficulties and the disappointments of research and cognisant of the need for dispassionate evaluation of its results.

The public should be made to understand that for one set of observations of practical utility many channels have been explored which apparently lead nowhere, that there have been scores, possibly hundreds, of abortive experiments, that a gain is often made by piecing together scraps of information gleaned from apparently unconnected sources, that research directed towards preconceived explanations and conclusions is worthless, that research may be the occasion of much mental stress and anguish, and that failure is more usual than success.

In no other way is it possible to prevent the setting in of the rot that threatens to destroy the fabric of a valuable structure; if the rot is allowed to start, there is no knowing where it will stop.

Editorial, 13 September 1930 (edited extract)