

apparently discussed it with one of his physicians, Dr. Henry Huntt. This charter member of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia repeatedly advised and urged his distinguished patient, as Adams wrote himself, "to spend the summer in the North and vegetate myself in a healthier climate."

If the burden of the office of President has been hard on its incumbents, the burden of caring for the Presidential health may well have been hard on the various medical men who served as physicians to our Presidents.

A statement after the death of President Harrison, first U. S. President to die in office, comments on this as follows:

"The deep political and personal interest dependent on the life of the President imposed on his attending physician a fearful responsibility, of which he felt himself painfully mindful. He speedily sought consultation and was scarcely ever absent from the house more than one hour together."

This statement was signed by five physicians, and the attending physician referred to was Dr. Thomas Miller. One of the five consultants called when President Harrison was stricken with the fatal attack of pneumonia was Dr. James C. Hall.

Dr. Hall must have been a strong-hearted man because he shouldered the responsibility of serving as family physician to some six or eight Presidents and their families.

One authority says he "attended professionally every President from Adams to Lincoln and a greater number of eminent American statesmen and foreign dignitaries residing here during that period than any other physician."

Dr. Hall left no memoirs. He was an early member of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. Mr. Roos says of him: "A man of independent means, he fell afoul of the Society's controversial regulations by failing to charge fees for his service. Dr. Hall was severely censured by the Society and repented in tears—it is recorded."

Science News Letter, February 11, 1956

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Warn About Science Evils

► AN IMPLIED WARNING that America should beware of allowing the Government, in its support of science, to fall unwittingly into evils practiced by Communist governments toward science was sounded by Dr. Raymond T. Birge of the University of California in delivering the retiring presidential address to the American Physical Society meeting in New York.

He warned especially against allowing ourselves to be overtaken by too much planning in basic research. He cited Communist dogma suggesting that all scientific research can and must be planned, and which asserts that teams of researchers of ordinary ability can accomplish more than geniuses.

The physicist quoted passages from a policy speech by Jan Dembowski, president of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which was intended for internal consumption.

Some sample Dembowski quotes, embodying ideas that are the antithesis of Western concepts of science, are:

"We must break away from the idea that scientific work is the result of inspiration, which cannot be planned . . ."

". . . it will be necessary . . . to fix norms for the amount of work to be done . . ."

"We cannot depend on geniuses, and with increasing frequency we are trying to solve scientific questions by working on them in teams. Today, a group of people of average ability, such as we can always mobilize, and who have a problem clearly marked out . . . can accomplish more than a single genius working on his own . . ."

Dr. Birge said that although Soviet scientists seem to be the highest paid group in Russia next to the politicians, "their personal freedom, or rather lack of freedom, seems to me to show certain striking similarities to the situation of the slaves of ancient Egypt or Greece."

The scientist also warned that America is likely to suffer, culturally, economically and defense-wise, unless measures are taken to cure the current shortage of scientists.

He predicted the current shortage of physicists is likely to last for another decade. Although every man, woman and child benefits from products that have their origin in the physics laboratory, an appalling percentage of Americans are never even exposed to the physical sciences during their schooling.

Science News Letter, February 11, 1956

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