McBride (7) in a brief note in the Dec. 16 *Lancet*, reported a 20% increase in severely malformed babies from the use of Distaval in early pregnancy. The malformation affected the mesenchymal tissue, both the long bones, and the musculature of the gut. Had anyone else seen anything like it? Lenz 8 replied to his letter in the Jan. 12 issue of the *Lancet*.

Spiers (9) in Stirlingshire, Scotland, had seen 10 infants with severe phocomelia during 1961. He immediately set to work to ascertain whether his cases were associated with Distaval. On questioning mothers and doctors he obtained a history of Distaval in 2 of the patients. Then he went to the office where all prescriptions are filed and with the names of the patients and the approximate date on which the medicine was given, he asked to have the prescriptions checked. It took 3 weeks. During this time he interviewed the mothers and in 2 instances the mothers finally remembered they had taken sleeping tablets and produced the bottles from which the tablets had been taken. The tablets therein were stamped DT/DL. Ultimately, he obtained positive proof that 8 out of 10 of these patients had taken Distaval in early pregnancy.

Thus, between Nov. 20, 1961, and January, 1962, the circumstantial evidence rapidly accumulated in different parts of the world which indicated that thalidomide played an important role in the production of phocomelia.

Further studies were instituted everywhere. Many clinics reported a history of the ingestion of Contergan could readly be obtained from the women in one-half of the instances but not in all cases.

A few, but remarkably few, prospective studies were instituted. One obstetrician asked each of 65 patients whether Contergan had been taken in early pregnancy and obtained a positive reply in only a single instance. He said if that woman had an abnormal baby he would believe Lenz. She did!

Professor Von Masselbach made a prospective study of 350 patients in his obstetrical clinic. Thirteen women had taken Contergan, 6 in the second half of pregnancy and 7 in the first half, i.e., in the first 4½ months. Among these 7 women, 2 had babies with phocomelia, 1 had a baby with an anal atresia, and 4 were normal.

In Düsseldorf, in a group of 300 women who had not taken Contergan, all the babies were healthy, whereas one-half of the women who took Contergan had abnormal children. These investigators also had collected 40 cases over a 2-year period. Seventy-five per cent of these mothers gave a history of Contergan. Since

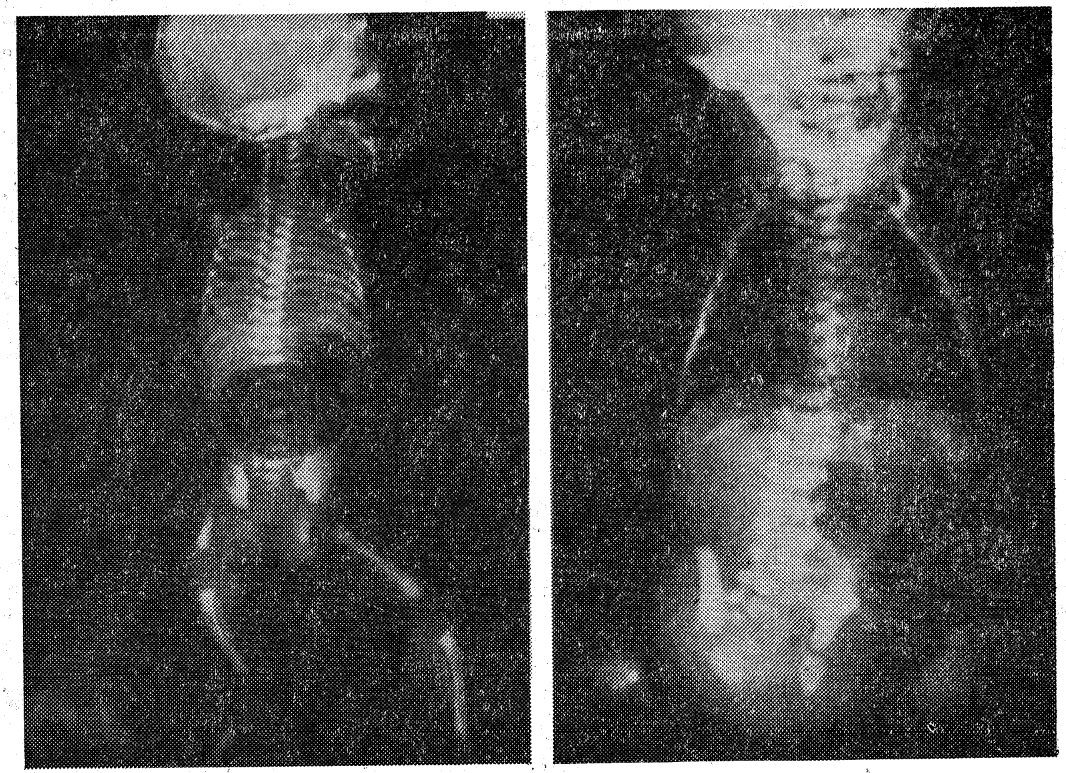

Fig. 6.—Radiologic evidence of intestinal obstruction and defects of bones of extremities.