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Letters

Vivisection Bill

I have seen the letter from Bradley T. Scheer of Eugene, Ore., [*Science* **132**, 851 (23 Sept. 1960)] dealing with S. 3570, a bill providing for federal regulation of animal experimentation. I am much distressed over what I think to be oversights in his reading of the bill. It will be found, if one looks at the wording carefully, that S. 3570 permits the use of live vertebrate animals "only" for medical and military research. No experimentation for the pursuit of knowledge per se is provided for, and no authorization is given for use of animals even in agricultural, veterinary, or animal husbandry work. Use of live vertebrate animals in teaching is authorized only for student surgeons, and then only if the animals are not allowed to survive the surgery—an absurd and crippling restriction. Scheer's statement that he "cannot find in this bill the evils" that others see is especially surprising because it would prohibit him from using live vertebrate animals unless he connects his work with medical or military objectives.

Scheer stated: "the bill gives no police powers to HEW or anyone else. . . ." Perhaps Scheer did not read section 4I which states, "Authorized representatives of the Secretary . . . shall be authorized to destroy or require the destruction of animals in accordance with rules, regulations, or instructions issued by the Secretary." What is this, if it is not police power?

The worst part of the bill, from my point of view, is that it would put in the hands of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare complete power over the character of animal experimentation that could be performed in the United States under federal subsidy which now means most of such work. We are presumably (and hopefully) a country ruled by laws and not men. Dictators (even benevolent ones) are anathema to us. It is perhaps true, as Scheer says, that the Secretary of HEW is unlikely to put the most rigid interpretations possible upon his authority if S. 3570 became law, but why should the United States take the risk of some Secretary impeding scientific research by doing so?

On the other hand, I do wish to say that I think I can understand why so many well-meaning people are favorably inclined to the ostensibly mild, but actually very drastic, provisions in S. 3570. Such bills appeal to everyone's humane instincts and we, as biological scientists, should be careful to distinguish between the good motives and the lack of knowledge or poor judg-

ment of the people who would like to satisfy their urge to promote gentleness in the use of experimental animals. Their lack of knowledge about the real situation may excuse many of them for their failure to recognize the great damage that would be done by the type of regulation they propose. Especially, they fail to see that, aside from providing more money for the construction and operation of facilities for the care of experimental animals, there is really no way in which federal intervention would actually increase the comfort of animals employed for legitimate purposes in scientific investigation and teaching.

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In your editorial of 1 July 1960 you gave your reasons for opposing a bill (S. 3570), which, if enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, would control vivisection in the U.S.A. In support of your opposition you made some quotations from a book written by myself. I recognize that you did so in good faith; but, to prevent misunderstanding, I want it to be known by your readers that I have studied this bill and hope that it will be enacted, for it has my full approval. I am a licensed vivisector under the laws of my own country.

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Conversion Factors

With reference to the letter from H. R. Dursch and the other letters published [*Science* **132**, 848 (23 Sept. 1960)] in reply to my letter [*Science* **132**, 256 (22 July 1960)], I am grateful to the various correspondents who called attention to my outdated tables of conversion factors. The observant Dursch, by the way, noted the revision of the nautical mile on 1 July 1954 but overlooked the revision of the length of the yard on 1 July 1959, a revision which increases the ratio nautical mile/statute mile from 1.150777 to 1.150779. (Incidentally, while replacing his outdated conversion tables, Dursch might also oil up his desk calculator and discover that the ratio 6076.1033/5280 does not equal 1.1507575).

Perhaps the various comments on my letter serve very well to emphasize the point I endeavored to make. Congratulations especially to William Allen who, having noted the recent revisions

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