

## NEWS IN BRIEF

● **DRAFT REFORM VIRTUALLY ASSURED:** Senate passage of the draft lottery bill seems assured now that supporters of broad reform have agreed to wait until next year. Senator John Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, had earlier refused action unless Senate debate could be limited to the lottery provision only. Stennis did not want amendments to the bill made without careful committee consideration. Draft reform supporters have agreed to limit debate, and in return Stennis has promised to hold broad reform hearings before 15 February. The bill, passed by the House earlier, repeals a section of the 1967 draft law that bars a lottery.

● **TYCOON COOLS STEAM CAR:** Industrialist William P. Lear, after an expenditure of \$5.5 million, has quit the steam car business. The creator of the Lear jet had said he planned to produce 1000 engines a day by the end of 1970 (*Science*, 24 January 1969), thus allowing steam cars to compete economically with internal combustion engine cars. Steam engine cars produce about 1 percent of the pollutants that an uncontrolled internal combustion engine emits. Lear now says that steam cars are too costly and too complicated to be feasible. He plans to shift his attention to the gas turbine.

● **ABORTION LAW REFORM:** Litigation aimed at eliminating antiabortion laws is expected in federal courts across the country following a decision in the District of Columbia that struck down its abortion statute. A U.S. District Court judge ruled that any licensed doctor could perform an abortion without legal limitations, because the 1901 law restricting abortions in D.C. was unconstitutionally vague. Roy Lucas, director of the James Madison Constitutional Law Institute in New York, and leader of a nationwide antiabortion law group, said he plans to use the D.C. ruling as a precedent in test cases to bring the issue before the Supreme Court quickly.

● **DRUG MAKERS DELAY FDA:** Litigation initiated by drug manufacturers has kept on the market at least one drug, Panalba, found harmful by the Food and Drug Administration in 1968, and about 175 other drugs found

ineffective. Last week the FDA further admitted it had taken no action yet on another 1700 brand-name drugs found ineffective 2 years ago by the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. FDA officials say Panalba is the only drug found harmful still on the shelf (*Science*, 29 August). In court, the manufacturers are arguing that the FDA's withdrawal procedures are unfair. William Goodrich, FDA chief counsel, predicted that a setback in the courts could delay the withdrawal of drugs for up to 10 years.

● **TORREY CANYON SETTLEMENT:** American owners of the giant tanker *Torrey Canyon* have agreed to settle oil pollution claims filed by Britain and France for \$7.2 million. The ship had rammed the Seven Stones Rocks off the southwest tip of England in March 1967, spilling 35 million gallons of oil and fouling British and French beaches. The payment constitutes final settlement of the governments' claims, but owners have set aside another \$60,000 to compensate private claimants.

● **MERCURIAL PHEASANTS:** Montana's Department of Health and the State Fish and Game Department warned hunters that game birds in the state contain more mercury than humans can tolerate. The high mercury content is believed to come from the organic mercury fungicides used to treat grains. Mercury contents in the birds range from 0.05 to 0.47 part per million; the tolerance level suggested by the World Health Organization is 0.05 parts per million. The state agencies said that probably no acute or long-term chronic effects would occur from eating one or two birds, but cautioned against regular consumption.

● **AAUP RATING SCALE REVISED:** The American Association of University Professors has replaced its eight-step letter grade rating scale for compensation with a ten-step numerical scale. As before, separate levels are established for universities and technical institutions, liberal arts and teacher colleges, and junior colleges. The new system, designed for operation beginning in 1970, will allow more accurate comparisons between pay scales at different institutions.

"interim report" had even been inserted in the *Congressional Record* for 1 May by Senator Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.). The researchers reported that 11 of the 120 compounds tested induced a "significantly elevated incidence of tumors, mostly hepatomas."\*

One of the researchers involved in the study said that there had been debate within the group on whether to use the word "tumorigenic" or "carcinogenic." R. R. Bates, a National Cancer Institute researcher on the project said in an interview with Bryce Nelson, former member of the *Science* news staff, "I would use the word carcinogenicity. I am no longer satisfied with the word we used." The journal article did point out that the use of the word hepatomas (liver tumors) "should not be considered as implying that these tumors are benign."

The background to the government's initiatives on DDT is too complex to analyze in detail, but actions by states and foreign governments this year (*Science*, 23 May) probably created some momentum. Last spring, shortly after the government found it necessary to seize a quantity of coho salmon in Michigan because of elevated concentrations of DDT, Secretary Finch appointed a Commission on Pesticides and Their Relationship to Environmental Health. Chairman of the commission is Emil M. Mrak, a former chancellor of the University of California at Davis and a food scientist of wide reputation. Membership is drawn mostly from among recognized university experts with a ballast of government representatives. HEW provided the staff.

The commission undertook a broad review of the research on active pesticide chemicals used in the United States. Only the first section of the report containing recommendations and summaries has been released; details of the study will follow in Part II and will include the findings of advisory panels on carcinogenesis, interactions, mutagenesis, and teratogenesis.

The commission asked that DDT and DDD be restricted "within two years to those uses essential to preservation of human health and welfare and approved unanimously" by the secretaries of HEW, Agriculture, and Interior. On this point and in its recommendations generally, the commission tactfully

\* These 11 compounds include 5 insecticides: *p,p'*-DDT, Mirex, bis(chloroethyl)ether, Chlorobenzilate, and Strobane; five fungicides: PCNB, Avadex, ethyl selenac, ethylene thiourea, and bis(2-hydroxyethyl)dithiocarbamic acid potassium salt; and the herbicide *N*-(hydroxyethyl)hydrazine.