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LETTERS

Fetal Research

On 12 July 1974, President Nixon signed into law Public Law 93-348, the National Research Act of 1974. Title II of this Act authorizes the establishment of a National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

One of the first tasks of this commission is to determine the nature, extent, and purposes of research involving living fetuses, and to consider alternative means for reaching those purposes. The commission is given 4 months to complete this study and to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). Until regulations are issued governing fetal research, HEW "may not conduct or support research in the United States or abroad on a living human fetus, before or after the induced abortion of such fetus, unless such research is done for the purpose of assuring the survival of such fetus."

As Assistant Secretary for Health, I have therefore instructed the health agencies of HEW to discontinue any such research, in their own direct activities as well as in grant or contract operations. This moratorium will remain in effect until the Secretary of HEW determines that it should be lifted.

It is also the responsibility of HEW grantees and contractors to discontinue any studies which fall within the limitations outlined above and to advise the awarding unit of HEW as to how they propose to comply with the moratorium.

Questions about research projects which are subject to the moratorium should be addressed to the HEW awarding agency.

CHARLES C. EDWARDS
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C. 20201

Fishery Conservation

The article "Law of the Sea: Fisheries plight poses dilemma for United States," by Luther J. Carter (News and Comment, 26 July, p. 336) contains much useful information but, unfortunately, several errors.

For example, Carter states, "This

year . . . an 'over catch' [of yellowfin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean] already has occurred because the member nations [of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission] failed to agree on the quota in time to notify the fishing fleet before the tuna season began." The 1974 season began on 1 January, but, because of a price dispute, few vessels began fishing until late January. On 17 March 1974 the member nations agreed on a quota of 175,000 short tons of yellowfin, and on the following day it was announced that the regulation would go into effect on that date. This was immediately relayed by radio to the vessels at sea by their managing owners. As of 27 August 1974, 154,496 tons of yellowfin have been taken, and it is anticipated that by the end of the year the catch will be very near the quota.

Carter stresses that "international cooperation is not merely desirable but essential in the management of highly migratory species," but then says, "Efforts to achieve this have been carried on, generally without much success, by a number of international fishery commissions. The imperiled status of the bluefin tuna in the Atlantic and the potential threat to the still apparently abundant yellowfin tuna fishery in the Pacific illustrates how much remains to be accomplished." The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, whose eight member nations take most of the total catch of tunas in the eastern Pacific Ocean, provides an outstanding example of international cooperation to achieve fishery conservation. The regulations of the commission, which have been in effect each year since 1966, are the result of recommendations of its scientific staff that are based on studies as exhaustive as its budget permits. The population of yellowfin of the eastern Pacific, according to all available evidence, is being maintained at approximately the level which will permit the maximum average sustained yield (1). Thus the greatest "potential threat" to this population would be refusal of one or more important fishing nations to cooperate with the regulatory program.

The reference to increases in the quota for yellowfin in the eastern Pacific requires explanation. The quotas have been increased from less than 100,000 tons during 1966 and 1967 to 175,000 tons in 1974. These increases have not resulted from pressure by the U.S. fishing industry, as Carter implies. Rather, the staff of the commission has