

the Environmental Defense Fund, suggested that any gene expressed out of its normal context has the potential for being harmful, and that the choice of *E. coli* as a permissible host is riskier than the NIH guidelines concede because of new information about the organism's pathogenicity in man. "Science must re-

main accountable to the public for its actions, and I do not see how it can possibly justify tinkering with the DNA of an organism known to be a human pathogen," Zimmerman opined.

Such were the highlights of the evidence presented to the New York State Attorney General. Most of the new con-

tributions to the debate came from opponents of the research, since the proponents have already stated their case several times. After a review of the transcript, the Attorney General's office will decide which is the more persuasive, and what action to recommend to the state legislature.—NICHOLAS WADE

## NAS-NRC: Three Committees Cut, Leaving the Reasons Unclear

The National Research Council (NRC) has terminated three long-standing committees that have done most of the NRC's work on narcotics and therapeutic drugs, in the process nettling the members of the panels by not really telling them the reasons why.

Committees come and go at the NRC—the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)—but the two major committees disbanded were unusually well established and influential and left gaps which their partisans are now trying to fill by establishing alternatives outside the walls of the Academy.

Historically, the NRC ended a long episode in the annals of narcotics research when it killed its Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence effective 1 July. Dating from the late 1920's, the committee played a central role in narcotics testing and addiction research, administering a grants program that in recent years topped \$200,000 annually. For many years the committee served in a potent advisory capacity to the agencies that enforced narcotics laws.

Also eliminated was the Drug Research Board, created in 1963 to deal with proliferating issues posed by therapeutic drugs, and the Committee on Problems of Drug Safety, which was organized in 1968 as an offshoot of the Drug Research Board.

The action by the NRC's Assembly of Life Sciences constituted a clean sweep of the NRC's main drug committees. It now appears probable that the Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence will be transplanted to a new setting with the blessings of several scientific societies and continued funding from federal agencies. A move is also afoot to set up an independent, successor body to the Drug Research Board.

Eviction from the Academy of these

committees has stirred up a fair amount of resentment in the research community affected, particularly, it seems, because the rationale for discontinuing the panels was never explained in detail.

Indirectly, at least, the decision to terminate the three committees seems to be a product of the process of reorganization and reform of the NRC which NAS president Philip Handler initiated in the early 1970's. As part of that process, major disciplinary groupings called "assemblies" were formed including an Assembly of Life Sciences, under which the three committees in question operated. Within the assemblies, large executive committees made up of outside scientists, the majority from academic institutions, were given an increased measure of authority over policy.

Handler has encouraged the NRC to take a hard look at all standing committees to make sure that they are still needed and are performing properly. The device generally used to evaluate these standing committees has been the small visiting committee, also made up of outsiders, usually university scientists.

This formula was applied to the three drug committees by the Assembly of Life Sciences, whose chairman is James D. Ebert, director of Woods Hole Marine Biology Laboratory. The visiting committee, chaired by John V. Taggart, chairman of the physiology department at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, reported to the assembly's executive committee, which early this year, meeting in executive session, decided on the terminations.

Ebert broke the news in a private meeting with the three chairmen of the committees: Leo E. Hollister, of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto, chairman of the drug dependence committee; Frederick E. Shideman, of

the University of Minnesota, chairman of the Drug Research Board; and Daniel L. Azarnoff, of the Kansas Medical Center, chairman of the drug safety panel. Hollister and Shideman say that neither then nor later did they see a copy of the visiting committee's report, and that at the meeting they were given a bare summary of the findings. Both indicated they were left without a clear idea of the reasons for the executive committee's decision.

Shideman did say that Ebert indicated that the executive committee seemed to think the effectiveness of the Drug Research Board had waned and also felt such a body within NRC should be a responsive group, rather than one that sought out problems as the Drug Research Board had done.

The assembly, in a report on its activities published this summer, did allude to the visiting committee's study and the executive committee's action. The visiting committee, it was noted, "evaluated the *modus operandi* of these committees, the merits of their contributions, the effectiveness of the mechanisms by which they select projects, the quality of the reports produced, and the overall contributions to American society. Finally, the committee assessed the propriety and wisdom of continuing these activities within the National Research Council." The report, however, did not specify on which if any of these counts the committees had been found wanting.

The report said the executive committee accepted the visiting committee's recommendations on winding up the affairs of the three committees but, rather than implement its suggestions on alternatives, "decided that no advisory committee on drugs would be established until a special panel had studied what direction the ALS-NRC should take in the drug field."

Ebert declined to comment, referring the matter back to Handler. The Academy president, for his part, noted through a spokesman that decisions on the fate of the committees had been made within the Assembly of the Life

Sciences and accepted by the central administration. The implication is that the assemblies have been encouraged to exercise a measure of home rule in policy matters and that Handler is reluctant either to second-guess them or to interpret the reasons for their action publicly.

The big question that all of this leaves unanswered is what criteria the NRC will apply in continuing or disbanding committees. The Assembly of Life Sciences executive committee also decided to end its Committee on Prosthetics Research and Development after study by a visiting committee. In this case, however, the report was apparently made available to the chairman, so such documents do not appear to be automatically sacrosanct. The assembly's Committee on Toxicology, founded in 1947, was studied and found worthy of continuation, so not all standing committees, obviously, will fall.

Visiting committees are a relatively new phenomenon at the NRC, and there is clearly a feeling that a more candid appraisal is likely if members of such a committee are assured that their views will be kept confidential. There seems to be much less reason for the executive committee to withhold its reasons for action.

Interest in such actions and criteria are likely to grow. The assembly, for example, is said to be launching a study of its Food and Nutrition Board, which has been a target of critics in the past because of substantial financing of its work by industry. And other NRC assemblies are going through similar exercises.

Perhaps some general rules are being applied. In the Handler era, an attitude has been fostered that committees should be formed for specific tasks and then disbanded when the task is accomplished. Also there is a heightened sensitivity to avoiding ties with industry that lend at least the appearance of conflict of interest.

Given the veil of confidentiality that has descended on the action on the three committees, it is hard to say if these factors were important. But the Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence and the Drug Research Board were, in their own ways, among the best known of NRC committees, and the termination inevitably leaves the members and partisans feeling dis-Established.

The Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence dates back through several name changes and nearly 50 years to the Committee on Drug Addiction. Until the 1960's, the committee played a pivotal role in the narcotics research field by effectively controlling supplies of narcotics available for experimental

purposes and limiting access to the field to a relatively small group of like-minded researchers. Under the domination of the late Nathan B. Eddy, the committee for most of four decades concentrated on a quest for a nonaddicting analgesic and on keeping new drugs with addicting properties off the market (*Science*, 21 Dec. 1973). For much of its life, the committee maintained close ties with agencies responsible for enforcement laws. Harry J. Anslinger, the redoubtable commissioner of the old Bureau of Narcotics, was an admirer and sometime member of the committee. Critics of the committee charged that it abetted official policy which treated addiction as a crime rather than an illness and favored controls

which made it difficult for physicians to treat addicts or for researchers to study narcotics addiction.

In later years, the committee broadened its views and research aims, but through its grants program it continued to play a pivotal role in screening and evaluating new drugs and in narcotics research. The growth of federal interest in narcotics problems, however, has long since ended the virtual monopoly which the NRC committee once held in the field. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), is the major granting agency for both basic and clinical research in the narcotics field and now, for example, directly funds a monkey colony at the University of Michigan, a major facility for the testing of abuse

## Nader Gives a Lesson to Psychologists

Ralph Nader has not run out of steam or originality, as attested by the address he delivered to an enthusiastic crowd at the September meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA).

According to an article in the November *APA Monitor*, Nader delivered a detailed broadside against social scientists, and psychologists in particular, for neglecting their responsibilities to the consumer movement.

Psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, he said, are concentrating on the study of individuals and noninstitutionalized groups while ignoring the large institutions, corporate and governmental, that have incalculable influence and power over the lives of individuals.

Psychologists, he said, study the individual mind outside of the institutional context; they do not study the corporate mind, or the corporate executive's mind. Yet, he asserted, "We're a society where most things that are done between people are done through the mechanisms of relatively large organizations."

Nader appears to have developed this theme after observing the travails of a Nader-sponsored team that has been conducting an intensive study, started in 1974, of the Educational Testing Service in Princeton. The initial aim of the study was to look at test bias and discern ways in which educational tests penalized or overlooked qualities such as drive, idealism, altruism, and creativity. But what they ended up being struck by was ETS's power—to stigmatize students, give them warped or bloated self-images, determine who goes to college and, in effect, to allocate "millions of careers."

The study of institutions is the study of power, said Nader, and social scientists are afraid to get into such politically charged areas. Sociologists will study a small town or a mass movement, but they won't study institutions such as Exxon or the Pentagon. Anthropologists investigate tribal societies, but not the U.S. court system.

The failure of social scientists to apply their methodological approaches to institutional structures and pathologies, noted Nader, means that these structures continue to be taken for granted and society is expending enormous energies in palliating the destruction they wreak—environmental poisons, auto accidents, and so forth—instead of attacking the problem at its roots.

Until recently, for example, the approach to preventing highway accidents has been to exhort drivers to drive safely rather than to get the auto industry to build safer cars. Likewise, high-energy consuming industries talk of the need for the consumer to adopt a less profligate "life-style"—but "the issue of life-style never applies to corporations." Said Nader, "Is it a technical problem? Is it an economic problem? Or, is it more basically a psychological problem of power?"—C.H.

potential of drugs, which was formerly funded through the NRC committee.

Though technically defunct, the drug dependence committee is still operating, with the Academy providing a temporary base while an attempt is made to set it up as an independent, nonprofit entity sponsored by a half-dozen or so scientific societies. The group appears to be getting a favorable response, including a firm "yes" from the American Chemical Society, and it hopes to be formally reestablished by the first of the year.

The Drug Research Board was founded in the aftermath of the passage of the Kefauver drug amendments in the early 1960's and established itself by producing the massive study on the safety and efficacy of therapeutic drugs required by the legislation. The committee has served as a forum for tripartite discussion of problems between industry, government, and academic scientists. It has sometimes been criticized as having excessive regard for industry concerns but has taken initiatives which led to agreement on a number of legislative and regulatory issues.

The American Medical Association is taking the lead in quiet, behind-the-scenes effort to rally support among professional organizations for establishment of an independent national commission on drugs to study and make recommendations on the sort of drug-related problems the Drug Research Board handled.

The NRC's own plans to offer expertise on narcotics and other drug problems are at this point unclear. The Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences is in the process of organizing a Committee on Substance Abuse and Habitual Behavior. This committee will be supported mainly by NIDA it appears, but the intention is that the panel look at habitual behavior in a broader context than the now-abolished Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence employed. Abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and gambling, for example, will be studied, in addition to narcotics use.

The Assembly of Life Sciences executive committee seems not to have committed itself on whether or how it will replace the three departed committees, but is said to have the matter on its agenda for its November meeting. The inclination seems to be to wait until a cluster of requests on the subject comes in and then determine what sort of a committee to set up. Some outsiders suggest that now that the three committees no longer exist in the NRC, it will be necessary to reinvent them.

—JOHN WALSH

## APPOINTMENTS

**William J. Sullivan**, provost, Seattle University, to president of the university. . . . **Alfred B. Rollins, Jr.**, vice president for academic affairs, University of Vermont, to president, Old Dominion University. . . . **Frederick E. Blumer**, vice president for academic affairs, Nebraska Wesleyan University, to president, Lycoming College. . . . **Laurence C. Smith**, president, Westmar College, to president, University of Albuquerque. . . . **Dennis O'Brien**, dean of the faculty, Middlebury College, to president, Bucknell University. . . . **Richard P. Richter**, vice president, Ursinus College, to president of the college. . . . **Donald H. Hangen**, dean of marketing and management, Northern Michigan University, to president, Corning Community College. . . . **Donald Wilson**, vice president for academic development, Olivet College, to president, Castleton State College. . . . **John A. Aragon**, director, Cultural Awareness Center, University of New Mexico, to president, New Mexico Highlands University. . . . **Paul W. Hoffman**, professor of psychology, Manchester College, to president, McPherson College. . . . **Gerard M. Mahoney**, superior, Vincentian Residence, Niagara Falls, to president, Niagara University. . . . **Donald R. Gerth**, vice president for academic affairs, California State University, Chico, to president, California State College, Dominguez Hills. . . . **Robert V. Iosue**, vice president for academic affairs, C. W. Post College, Long Island University, to president, York College of Pennsylvania. . . . **Robert C. Good**, dean, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, to president, Denison State University. . . . **Joseph F. Volker**, president, University of Alabama, Birmingham, to chancellor, University of Alabama System. . . . **Truman O. Anderson**, dean, School of Basic Medical Sciences, Medical Center Campus, University of Illinois, to executive dean, College of Medicine at the university. . . . **Daniel C. Tosteson**, dean, biological sciences division, University of Chicago, to vice-president, Medical Center at the university. . . . **Alexander M. Schmidt**, commissioner, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, to vice chancellor for health services, University of Illinois Medical Center, Chicago. . . . **Conny E. Nelson**, assistant vice president for academic affairs, University of Nebraska, to vice president for academic affairs, University of North Dakota.

## RECENT DEATHS

**Merton B. Anderson**, 73; former professor of pathology, Howard University College of Medicine; 7 August.

**Mary J. Brown**, 80; former professor of biology, Oakland City College; 25 August.

**Albert F. Bush**, 60; professor of engineering and public health, University of California, Los Angeles; 29 August.

**Allan M. Cartter**, 54; former chancellor, New York University; 4 August.

**Bohuslav B. Divis**, 33; associate professor of mathematics, Ohio State University; 26 July.

**James H. Eakin, Jr.**, 53; chairman of agronomy extension, Pennsylvania State University; 31 July.

**Luigi Gorini**, 72; former professor of microgenetics and microbiology, Harvard University; 13 August.

**Stephen P. Hatchett**, 61; former professor of biology, American University; 22 August.

**Evelyn E. Henley**, 63; former head, anesthesiology department, Howard University; 28 August.

**Paul F. Lazarsfeld**, 75; professor emeritus of social science, Columbia University; 30 August.

**Hugh R. Leavell**, 73; retired professor of public health practice, Harvard University; 7 August.

**William B. McLean**, 62; retired technical director, Naval Undersea Center; 25 August.

**James Olds**, 54; professor of behavioral biology, California Institute of Technology; 21 August.

**William J. Pistor**, 76; chairman emeritus, animal pathology department, University of Arizona; 5 August.

**David Rahm**, 45; professor of geology, Western Washington State College; 4 August.

**Willard C. Rappleye**, 84; former dean, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University; 19 August.

**Frederick L. Redefor**, 71; former professor of education, New York University; 2 August.

**Robert H. Schiffman**, 53; dean of graduate studies and research, California State University, Northridge; 28 August.

**J. S. Scott, Sr.**, 90; former president, Wiley College; 3 August.

**Elizabeth B. Torrey**, 75; former dean, School of Nursing, Yale University; 14 August.

**Benjamin P. Watson**, 96; former professor of obstetrics and gynecology, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University; 8 August.