

University an associate professor in computer engineering commands a \$35,000 annual salary "and it should be more. They can get an associate professor in the humanities for nineteen or twenty thousand and only humanitarian considerations prevent it from being lower."—**JOHN WALSH**

Contraband Cells

Many researchers do not know it—and a few have learned it the hard way—but they need a permit from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to bring cultured cells into this country from abroad. The reason for this is the possibility that the cells or their culture medium might harbor pathogens that could cause economic damage to the U.S. agricultural industry. A major concern is foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), which is no longer found in this country, but does exist in many others. (Australia, Japan, and the United Kingdom are exceptions.)

Although researchers have always exchanged cell lines, they are apparently doing it more now because of the great popularity of monoclonal antibodies, with their high specificity and reproducibility, as research tools. The antibodies are produced by hybridomas, lines of hybrid cells formed by fusing mammalian cells, generally from mice. Virtually all cultured mammalian cells have been in contact with fetal calf serum, a possible source of the FMD virus, at some point in their life.

Investigators who have tried to import hybridomas developed by their foreign colleagues have run into problems. "If the country of origin has a history of foot-and-mouth disease, we will deny entry," says Laura Peterson of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Two or three cell lines were stopped in early February by USDA inspectors, Peterson notes.

Moreover, the investigator will not get a permit if there is a chance that the cell culture contains FMD virus, unless the culture goes through quarantine at the Plum Island (New York) Animal Disease Center where it can be tested for possible infectivity. This must be arranged in advance and can cost thousands of dollars because the

material must currently be tested in living animals. The USDA hopes to develop a much cheaper test tube assay for FMD virus, but this is at least 2 years away and will be something of an inconvenience.

Meanwhile, some researchers are doing a bit of quiet smuggling, says one investigator who wants to remain anonymous for the obvious reason. When USDA inspectors detect such contraband, they impound it. If a permit cannot be obtained, the cells may be sent back to the country of origin. Otherwise they will be incinerated.

—**JEAN L. MARX**

NIDA Sees Bias in Scientists' Drug Meeting

The refusal by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to sponsor an upcoming meeting of drug experts has highlighted the intense and polarized nature of the conflicts that run through the field.

The National Association of Drug Abuse Programs is planning to hold its biennial scientific meeting in New York at the end of March. NIDA agreed to be one of the sponsors and approved the format, which includes debates on a number of controversial subjects, including the dangers of marijuana use.

However, when NIDA learned the names of two of the panel moderators it protested and told the meeting organizer, Barry Stimmel of Mount Sinai Medical Center, that the agency would withdraw its sponsorship. The two are Lester Grinspoon and Norman Zinberg, both psychiatrists at Harvard University. Both are identified with the more pragmatic—or lenient—or open-minded (depending on who is doing the identifying)—approach to drug use. Both favor decriminalization (not legalization) of marijuana.

Stimmel says that Jack Durell, NIDA's associate director for science, told him NIDA objected to the two individuals because panel moderators should be "neutral." Stimmel says Grinspoon and Zinberg are respected senior authorities on drug abuse, and not regarded as extremists. Besides, Grinspoon's panel, on the "social" use of marijuana, was scheduled to include a paper by Robert Dupont,

NIDA director under Jimmy Carter who has become an outspoken anti-drug crusader. Stimmel said he thought the NIDA decision was "injudicious" and "unfortunate."

Grinspoon goes further, claiming that NIDA's decision is a sign that it is becoming "increasingly politicized." Several participants in the conference point out that NIDA in its attempt to establish a political constituency has been cultivating the parents' groups. The agency is under "a lot of pressure to put out word that all drug use is bad," says Stimmel.

Durell indicated as much when he told *Science* that the two psychiatrists tend to take an "open exploratory view" rather than one which puts primary emphasis on the hazards of drugs.—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**

San Diego Picks the Stars over Sodium

The San Diego city council has now reversed an earlier decision to install sodium street lights that might have eventually blinded the nearby Palomar Mountain observatory. (*Science*, 15 July 1983, p. 247).

At issue was the replacement of San Diego's 27,000 aging mercury-vapor street lights. The cheapest alternative, used in many cities, is the so-called low-pressure sodium lamp. It also happens to be the type most favored by astronomers, emitting nearly all of its spectral energy in the yellow sodium doublet lines, which the researchers can filter out or ignore. However, they were opposed by councilman William Mitchell because their deep yellow color makes people "look like cadavers." In June he persuaded the council to install pink-orange *high*-pressure sodium lamps, whose broad-band spectrum is impossible to ignore.

Nearly 9000 of the high-pressure lamps have already been installed. On 7 February, however, after stormy debate, the council voted 6 to 3 to reverse itself. The two members who switched their votes said the astronomers had convinced them that protecting a resource like Palomar was more important to the city than quibbling over the color of lights.

—**M. MITCHELL WALDROP**