

# Letters

## Animal Rights Literature

The letter of John Hoyt, president of the Humane Society of the United States (17 Mar., p. 1419), requires a response. He states, "The HSUS is not an antivivisection society." Yet in their 1988 Holiday Appeal (1), signed by Hoyt, we find the following statements: "Not only have we continued to work to abolish the cruel psychological experimental research . . . , but we have also prodded commercial and government-funded laboratories to *eliminate altogether the use of animals as research subjects*" (emphasis added). In his letter to *Science*, Hoyt writes, "[W]e object to characterization of animal activists as anti-science, anti-intellectual, and anti-rational." Although such labels undoubtedly do not apply to all animal rightists, comments by some of the leading figures in the movement and statements in the literature of major animal rights organizations indicate that these labels are indeed appropriate for some members of that camp.

One of the more common assertions is the description of some research projects as "bizarre and of no practical value." Programs are frequently criticized as having no relation to human health problems, and some supposedly "moderate" animal rights advocates would allow research only if it can be shown to be directly helpful to humans. For example, Neal Barnard (2) is credited with stating, at a recent symposium on our campus, that it is pointless to use animals for AIDS research because the disease is peculiar to human beings. He is further quoted as saying, "There is no good animal model for AIDS. There are monkeys which have a disease similar to AIDS but it is caused by a different virus" (3). But as Robert Leader and Dennis Stark point out in their excellent review (4),

There has probably been more rapid progress in knowledge of AIDS over the past 5 years than of any other very difficult medical conundrum in history. Much of this progress has been due to understanding and cooperation between those studying a purely human disease and conditions afflicting animals.

We could cite numerous other examples of anti-scientific and anti-intellectual statements by leading figures in the animal rights movement. Clearly, many choose to ignore the fact that virtually every advance in the biomedical field has depended ultimately on basic research (5), much of it using animals, and some of which is characterized as bizarre by animal rightists.

Perhaps most insidious are the written distortions of medical history in the anti-

vivisectionist literature. For example, in a slick, pseudoscientific booklet published by the American Anti-Vivisection Society, we learn from Brandon Reines (6) that William Harvey did not need animals [contrary to Harvey's own words (7)] to deduce the functions of the circulatory system. Instead he made do with cadaver hearts and his own arm. We also learn, in a section devoted to showing us that animals were not necessary for developing immunosuppressive drugs, that "the ability of corticosteroids to kill white blood cells was known from studies of actual human patients as long ago as 1855" (6, p. 55), a "fact" that would have astonished Addison (8). In another publication (9), Reines tells us that Banting and Best need not have used dogs in the research that led to the discovery of insulin. Isn't hindsight wonderful? Throughout these tracts and others like them [particularly the writings of Hans Ruesch (10)] we are told over and over that everything we know about biomedicine has come from clinical observations and that animal experimentation has actually held back progress in finding cures and treatments for human diseases. Unfortunately, some people believe these fairy tales.

Another example of irrational rhetoric from the animal rightists is the equating of killing broiler chickens in slaughterhouses to the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis (11). They also analogize the Emancipation Proclamation, the civil rights movement, and efforts to win equal rights for women with the "liberation" of turkeys from poultry farms or of rabbits from research laboratories. We find such statements to be repugnant. They are racist, sexist, and misanthropic.

In view of the record, we would have found Hoyt's expression of umbrage more convincing if he had disavowed such statements, which are made all too frequently by his compatriots.

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## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. "Holiday appeal" (Humane Society of the United States, Washington, DC, 1988).
2. Neal Barnard is Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at George Washington University, Washington, DC, and chairman of the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine.
3. *Daily Californian*, 9 February 1989. Copies of this article are available to interested readers who send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
4. R. W. Leader and D. Stark, *Perspect. Biol. Med.* **30**, 470 (1987).
5. J. H. Comroe, *Exploring the Heart* (Norton, New York, 1983).
6. B. Reines, *Heart Research on Animals* (American Anti-Vivisection Society, Jenkintown, PA, 1985), p. 44.
7. W. Harvey, *An Anatomical Disquisition on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*, translated from the

- Latin by Robert Willis (Dent, London, 1907).
8. T. Addison, *On the Constitutional and Local Effects of Disease of the Suprarenal Capsules* (Highley, London, 1855).
9. B. Reines, *The Truth Behind the Discovery of Insulin* (American Anti-Vivisection Society, Jenkintown, PA, undated).
10. H. Ruesch, *Slaughter of the Innocent* (Civitas, Klosters, Switzerland, 1985).
11. C. Brown, *Washington Post*, 13 November 1983, p. B1.

## Office of Scientific Integrity

In her News & Comment article "Fraud review may be taken from NIH" (24 Mar., p. 1545), Barbara J. Culliton refers to "a proposal" to create two new offices in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for dealing with scientific misconduct. In fact, the Public Health Service (PHS) has already made the decision to establish these offices. The 16 March 1989 *Federal Register* notice referred to in Culliton's article was published as part of DHHS standard procedure for announcing changes within its organization.

Over the last year, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA) have consulted with the research community on how to improve our system for dealing with scientific misconduct. As a result, the PHS decided that the establishment of two offices—complementary but not overlapping—would strengthen our oversight and investigative functions in detecting and preventing scientific misconduct. Any allegations or suspicions of misconduct in biomedical or behavioral research, research training, and related activities supported with funds authorized by the PHS Act will be handled by these offices.

The Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI) will be housed in the Office of the Director, NIH, and will be jointly administered by NIH and ADAMHA. The OSI will see that all PHS policies and procedures related to scientific misconduct are implemented; it will monitor the individual investigations into scientific misconduct conducted by institutions that receive PHS funds for biomedical or behavioral research; and it will conduct its own investigations.

The Office of Scientific Integrity Review (OSIR), in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, will establish overall PHS policies and procedures for dealing with misconduct in science; review all final reports of investigations to ensure that any findings and recommendations are sufficiently documented; and make final recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for