

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Teasing Young Minds with Biology

Students are bombarded these days with warnings that drugs will fry their brains. The aim of these campaigns is to steer kids away from illicit substances, but one federal research program director thinks campaigns like this may have a hidden benefit: they might coax inquisitive students to pursue careers in biology.

Fred Goodwin, director of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration, says there is some evidence that the anti-drug media blitz is prompting students to become more interested in the workings of their own brains. But, he says, "no one is taking advantage of their natural interest" to turn them on to biology.

No one, that is, but Goodwin himself. The ADAMHA director is attacking what he sees as an impending crisis in science education—especially biology. He is starting a \$50,000 pilot program that would bring 18 high school teachers into the research labs of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Mental Health for 2 months this summer.

While Goodwin admits that it's a minuscule sum compared to his overall \$2.6-billion budget, he hopes to increase the program's scope in 1992. This expanded effort would send research scientists to schools and provide additional training and demonstration programs.

Correction

In a report regarding the murder of Hyram Kitchen, a University of Tennessee veterinarian (9 March, p. 1183), *Science* incorrectly reported that Frederick A. King, director of

Yerkes Regional Primate Center, had telephoned the sheriff's office to ask if any involvement by animal rights activists was suspected. In fact, King says he did not at any time contact any police department in any state, nor did he encourage anyone else to. There were newspaper reports that people from Emory University, which owns Yerkes, had made such inquiries, but King says he knew nothing of them at the time. In any case, it is not clear what triggered the rumor—which apparently had no foundation—that animal rights activists had launched a murderous campaign against veterinarians.

Sudanese Scientists Detained

The Islamic community in Britain is in an uproar over reports that prominent Sudanese biologist Farouk Mohamed Ibrahim, a professor at the University of Khartoum, has been jailed and tortured in his homeland for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution, according to the 17 March issue of the *New Scientist*. The British Moslems publicly expressed their view that there is no conflict between Darwinism and Islam and were reportedly preparing to enlist the international Islamic community to bring pressure for Ibrahim's release.

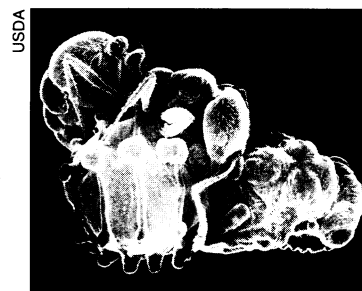
But the problem is a lot bigger than Ibrahim's arrest. Since the military government took over in June of last year, several hundred individuals, many of them scientists, engineers, and physicians, have been arrested. Tracking this disturbing pattern has been the Africa Watch Committee, a human rights group. In a March report, the organization quoted a letter smuggled out of prison from Ibrahim in which he said "no specific charges were levied" against him, although one of his interrogators indicated that "he disapproves of the contents of the courses I teach." So the most likely explanation of what is happening in the Sudan is a

A Wasp by Any Other Smell . . .

A Department of Agriculture research team in Florida thinks it has found a way to harness one of nature's olfactory tricks to help control the fire ant, now a serious pest in the southeastern United States. Fire ants identify fellow colony members by odor, so anyone who doesn't smell right gets attacked and killed.

But the *Oreocera* wasp has found a way around this defense. It lays its eggs on plant leaves, where they develop into tiny worm-like larvae. When a fire ant is out browsing, a wasp larva attaches itself to the unsuspecting creature's body and is carried back to the colony. There, the larva acquires the colony odor and proceeds to feed, without interference, on the developing ants.

The researchers at the USDA's Insects Affecting Man and Animals Research Laboratory in Gainesville say wasps can't solve the whole problem, but if ways could be found to introduce wasp larvae into ant mounds, the stress on the colony could make the fire ant more susceptible to other control methods.



Imposter. A fire ant carries the pupa of its wasp parasite.

political rather than a religious purge.

Asked specifically about Ibrahim's detainment, a spokesman at the Sudanese embassy in Washington, D.C., told *Science* that the embassy had heard of no arrest of anyone for teaching evolution. The AAAS and several medical organizations are sending a two-man delegation to the Sudan on 30 April to try to get more information on all of the detentions.

Physics Award Yields High Return

The Pelham Regional School in Amherst, Massachusetts, surely never dreamed that by giving visiting Japanese exchange student Akiyoshi Sueno a \$15 physics award back in 1965, it was making an investment that would yield a 66,000% gain.

Sueno, now an executive of a manufacturing company in Osaka, Japan, has given the school \$10,000 to bolster the importance of the annual physics award and to recognize worthy students for other scientific accomplishments.

Cocaine Shrinks Your Brain?

Researchers have long suspected that chronic cocaine use causes brain damage, but until recently, the evidence has been only behavioral. Now, neurologists at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minnesota have come up with the first tangible evidence that habitual cocaine usage causes cerebral atrophy.

The finding was an inadvertent result of a large-scale study designed to explore the incidence of brain seizures among habitual cocaine users. The Minnesota team, headed by Alvaro Pascual-Leone, studied the records of 474 patients treated for the complications of acute cocaine intoxication, 456 of whom were identified as habitual users and 44 of whom experienced seizures.

When researchers compared the brain scans of the habitual and moderate users, they found that more than half of the habitual users showed cerebral atrophy, a finding they have published in the March issue of *Neurology*.