

Letters

Animal-Care Legislation

In recent years measures have been introduced regularly before Congress to regulate animal research. In the past, bills have, fortunately, failed to make progress in the legislatures. A few new twists have been added in the current session and merit comment. Senator Joseph Clark, one of the most determined of the supporters of such legislation, this year has been joined in his sponsorship of S. 1071 by Senators Bartlett, Muskie, Young (Ohio), and Byrd (Virginia). Thus those Senate liberals who usually sponsor these animal-care bills are now supported by a mighty vote of conservatism.

In his introduction of the measure, Senator Clark sounded a new note. Referring to the frustration of his proposed legislation in earlier sessions of the Senate, Clark said:

And yet opposition to this bill, conducted under the pretense of protecting legitimate research from redtape and government bureaucracy, has delayed action on the legislation. This opposition comes in large measure from the organizations which prey upon helpless animals for profit made by selling the animals to laboratories for research experiments.

There we have it. Biological and medical research workers are not really the group opposed to bills like that introduced by Senator Clark. It is really a cabal instituted by companies who reap profit from the sale of experimental animals. I think it incumbent upon investigators who experiment on animals to prove the falsity of this view by registering their opposition to his measure through letters sent to Senator Lister Hill, chairman of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. In the House of Representatives, Congressman James Cleveland has proposed a bill (H.R. 5647) which is the companion piece to S. 1071.

Senator Maurine Neuberger, who formerly supported the Clark bill, has changed her thinking on the subject and now sponsors a bill, S. 1087, which represents a distinct improvement over her earlier views. There is, however, a portion of this measure which must

find great opposition among biomedical scientists. Section 7 of S. 1087 proposes the establishment of a reference library, within the National Institutes of Health, which will accumulate a record of all research involving the use of animals and supported by government funds. Section 7 further directs that each agency and department must check the files of the reference library before supporting animal research in order to determine whether similar or identical research has been previously conducted. In her introduction of S. 1087 Senator Neuberger noted that "this library would have no censorship functions. It would merely provide the granting or contracting authority with the background information as an aid to determining the efficacy of a proposal."

The fact is that NIH already has in the National Library of Medicine this very information. Furthermore, the ultimate decision on whether proposed research will be supported is made by study sections composed of authorities in particular fields of investigation, experts who more than anyone else are familiar with the pertinent literature. A measure of this sort can readily delay grants for months before someone has collected and digested masses of information, mostly irrelevant but provided by the computer of the reference library. (And who will this someone be?) It should also be obvious that this criterion of "similar or identical research" if applied at all would doom nearly all research to nonsupport by the government. The examples of one investigator's success where others have failed or of one worker's new insight and technical advancement in similar or identical research are too numerous to cite.

Finally, there is a measure before Congress which warrants support. Representative Edward Roybal has introduced a bill (H.R. 5191) whose purpose and wording should be acceptable to a great majority of biomedical investigators. The bill clearly states the need for continuing use of experimental animals, not only for applied purposes but also for the acquisition of funda-

mental knowledge and for teaching purposes. The bill authorizes governmental research into better animal care, training and education in the best techniques, and dissemination of information on the subject. The Surgeon General is authorized to set standards for the operation of animal facilities and receive assurances as he deems necessary that these standards are being met. The basic difference between the Roybal bill and the other measures is that Roybal has not started out with the assumption that a serious crime—cruelty to animals—is escaping notice. His measure is not punitive but constructive, providing for an improvement in animal care. The other measures provide for the regulation of biomedical scientists and can only hamstring a creative and successful community.

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Information Race Again

Because of the lag in most scientific journals between acceptance of a paper and its publication, experimenters often find that their work duplicates studies that have been completed and are in press. Knowledge of these studies as they are accepted rather than when they are published would be of inestimable value. The American Psychological Association's Project on Scientific Information Exchange in Psychology [see W. D. Garvey and B. C. Griffith, *Science* **146**, 1655 (1964)] is testing methods for improving the immediate flow of completed research. One improvement is the publication of the titles and authors of manuscripts as they are accepted. This is of great help to the researcher in maintaining contact with ongoing work in his specialty.

We suggest that a central reference pool could be created to provide a similar service for all scientific journals. Perhaps the National Science Foundation or a similar body (AAAS?) could support the establishment of this service. Scientists could pay an annual fee for each area of interest about which they would like to be kept up to date. A mailing list for each such topic could be maintained, and subscribers could be provided with monthly reports of articles accepted for publication and the names and addresses of the authors. This would prevent