LETTERS

New Recombinant DNA Guidelines

The statement that "All gene splicing experiments with *E. coli* K12 may now be conducted in minimal (P1) containment" (News and Comment, 15 Feb., p. 745) is not correct. The revised National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guidelines for Recombinant DNA Research, as promulgated on 29 January 1980, continue to prohibit certain experiments using *E. coli* K-12 and continue to exempt others from the guidelines. Still other experiments are permitted at P1 containment, but only when an EK1 host-vector system is used, "(i.e., (a) the host shall not contain conjunction-proficient plasmids or generalized transducing phages, and (b) lambda or lambdoid bacteriophages or non-conjugative plasmids shall be used as vectors)." The September 1979 proposal of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee was not accepted in toto. The NIH Director rejected an exempt status for such experiments and required a more conservative review procedure for "any experiment in which there is a deliberate attempt to have the *E. coli* K-12 efficiently express any gene coding for a eukaryotic protein."

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Caffeine Study

Michael Jacobson (Letters, 18 Jan., p. 258) quotes a paper by our team in support of his assertion that caffeine is teratogenic (*1*). This statement is somewhat overstretching our conclusions.

Our study compared the frequency of various environmental, including dietary, factors in a group of 202 mothers (cases) of newborn children with birth defects and in a group of 175 mothers (control) of normal children. Average coffee intake, during pregnancy, as reported by the mothers after delivery, was one factor that showed a statistically significant ($P < .05$) difference between the two groups. This difference was particularly marked for heavy coffee consumption, defined as 8 cups or more per day. Heavy coffee drinkers were represented by 22 percent of the case group versus 12 percent in the control group.

While we considered this observation worth publishing, our conclusions were deliberately cautious: "The data pre-