

acceptance of suicide as an option can detract from the larger issue, which is bringing more humane care to terminally ill people.

Cicely Saunders, director of St. Christopher's hospice in London, is strongly opposed to the movement supporting voluntary euthanasia on the ground that "committing suicide will no longer be seen as a right. It will fast become a duty."

Humphrey argues that even in hospices, where management of pain and suffering takes precedence over prolongation of life, one in five of the patients dies a painful death. He believes that no matter how much institutional care improves, there will always be people who want, and have a right, to arrange their own deaths.

Not What You Know but Where You're from

Two psychologists have completed a project which they believe demonstrates that scientific journal reviewers are often unduly influenced by the institutional affiliation of authors whose papers they review.

The pair, Stephen Ceci of the University of North Dakota, and Douglas Peters, now at Cornell University, selected ten articles published in ten widely read psychological journals. They rewrote the abstracts, doctored opening sentences, and substituted fake names and institutional affiliations for the authors. Then they re-submitted the papers to the journals that had published them. Reviewers for three of the journals spotted the deception. The other seven papers went through the normal process. Ceci and Peters report that, of the 22 editors and reviewers involved in reading the papers, only four recommended publication—which adds up to a 73 percent rejection rate by journals for papers they had previously accepted.

The study will no doubt bolster the complaints of many junior investigators who believe a system of "blind reviews," where the author's identity is removed from the paper, may be the only way to prevent reviewers from being influenced by institutional affiliations.

What did the journal editors think of the study? Ceci says two of them were defensive and dismissed the study as "trivial," but the rest were cooperative. Garth Thomas, editor of the *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*—which accepted the paper resubmitted to it—agrees that affiliation with a prominent institution definitely has a "halo effect," but thinks the bias only operates with "marginal" papers.

The authors submitted their study to *Science*, but it was rejected.

House Report Nails AEC for Sheep Deaths

Question: What, in the summer of 1953, was "hotter than a \$2 pistol?" Answer: certain Utah sheep, as described by scientists from the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), in a preliminary investigation of mysterious sheep deaths following two atom-bomb tests.

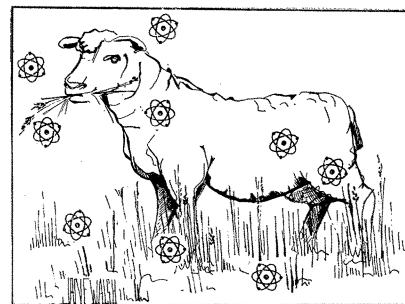
According to a recent House report, however, the AEC more or less swept the hot sheep under the rug and indeed suppressed information that might have implicated radioactive fallout in the widespread ovine fatalities that year.

The House subcommittee on oversight and investigations last summer held hearings in Nevada and Utah as part of an ongoing effort to determine whether the government was responsible for sheep deaths as well as for allegedly high cancer rates among people living downwind of the Nevada Test Site. So far about 1000 people have filed for damages against the government.

After hearing extensive testimony, including a study of sheep deaths by a former member of the AEC Fallout Studies Branch, the committee has concluded that "sufficient evidence exists for the government to accept at least compassionate responsibility, if not strict liability," for human injuries, and recommends passage of legislation (already introduced by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Representative Gunn McKay (D-Utah) amending the Federal Tort Claims Act to allow for compensation of the alleged victims.

The committee comes down very hard on the AEC, claiming that the government "knowingly disregarded and suppressed evidence correlating the deaths of the sheep to exposure to radioactive fallout," and asserting that fallout "more likely than not" was the cause.

The scientific evidence for the committee conclusion comes from former AEC official Harold Knapp, who put together a 450-page report on the sheep deaths in his spare time. Some 1,420 lambing ewes and 2,970 new lambs, out of a sheep population of 11,710, died during the spring and summer of 1953. Although the AEC cites bad weather and lack of forage as a prime cause, Knapp says that the most likely explanation of the



ewe deaths was eating radioactive grass, which led to irradiation of the gastrointestinal tract, and that newborn lambs died from prenatal accumulation of radioactive iodine in their thyroid glands. The AEC at the time claimed that sheep grazing downwind did not suffer effects resembling those experimentally induced at the Hanford Atomic Products Operation in Richland, Washington, where pregnant ewes had been fed radioactive iodine. And it said that surviving ewes in the population affected by atomic blasts showed no thyroid abnormalities.

Knapp contends that the AEC failed to look at the gastrointestinal tracts, where fresh fission products would have their primary effects. He also says that most AEC measurements were made on sheep that were not in the highest fallout area.

In a 1955 lawsuit by sheepmen to claim damages from the government, the judge reluctantly ruled against them, in large part because the AEC had classified all the relevant documents and the sheepmen had no expert witnesses to testify on their behalf.

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