

To the Editor

The June 1988 issue of *The Physiologist* contained communications which reveal in the most pointed way a difficulty facing the biomedical community. Larry Horton carefully outlined the program of animal activists, pointing out that they are a destructive force whose aim is total abolition of the use of animals in research. Cheryl Scott, on the other hand, reiterates many of the unsupported claims of the avowed antivivisectionists as well as making the most basic errors of scientific reasoning.

Scott seems to believe scientists treat their animals only as "lab reagents" and care nothing about their welfare. I suppose this view comes from a few alleged cases. Is that how her science is done, by picking an aberrant experiment and extrapolating to the general conditions? She notes that even if we have not witnessed abuse, "it does exist." It seems it is no longer necessary to document charges.

Scott argues that a single base pair alteration may lead to a significant difference in function of a protein. This in turn invalidates much (all?) application of knowledge gained from animals to humans. Can she seriously believe that the physiological knowledge gained from a study of rats, dogs, even fish cannot be applied to humans? Did Claude Bernard, August Krogh or Julius Comroe live in vain?

Scott charges that even a "panel of experts" cannot keep abreast of the literature so "... many projects are funded of no value. ..." (It is an interesting insight to her thinking that she places quotation marks around the words, panel of experts.) Is she suggesting that animal activists are

better judges of the worth of a research proposal than a panel of experts?

Finally, she bemoans the fact that we perceive the animal activists as foes of biomedical research, rather than people who are only "trying to raise the consciousness of scientists about very real issues." With her personal experience with the "vast majority" of animal activists, Scott is surely aware that nearly every animal activist society has clearly enunciated its goal: to stop animal research entirely.

In Michigan, the Michigan Humane Society has stated, "the Michigan Humane Society is against live animal experiments, no matter where the animals are take from."¹ All societies with the label "antivivisection" in their title have as their stated goal the abolition of animal research, for that is the meaning of antivivisection. Societies such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are clearly abolitionist. These groups are not trying to learn the truth about animal research; they are trying to put an end to it.

The biomedical community is under attack. If we do not respond, research and the health and well being of all humans will suffer. Larry Horton said it well: "Spectators will not determine the outcome; players will." I hope our membership will become active players.

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¹ Michigan Humane Society, Sept. 1980

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pounds, shelters, animal clinics and hospitals, kennels and catteries, and pet shops; developing a model pound release law for use by state and local governments; and preparing comments on the proposed Animal Welfare Act regulations that deal with exercise for dogs and the psychological well-being of primates.

It should be evident that our Society now is moving in a direction to better inform its members on animal issues by implementing the GRIP Committee recommendations and involving the public affairs and animal care and experimentation committees in the battle plans. (For those who do not believe that this is a battle, you probably have not had the shock of local government prohibiting the use of pound animals in your laboratory. The antivivisectionists clearly have set the order of battle and the time has come when we must draw the line.)

What each committee needs is input from you. I urge each of you to contact the proper chairman with your thoughts and ideas as well as any particular problems you may have in dealing with antivivisectionists. To help keep you informed *The Physiologist* has and will continue to provide important information about the activities of antivivisectionists at the national, state, and local levels and the *FASEB Newsletter* also has information concerning national legislative affairs.

I am asking all members to support these committees by becoming an active member of a network of physiologists who stand ready to respond forcefully and rapidly in the Society's proactive programs to meet the antivivisectionists' challenges to halt the use of animals in research.

Aubrey E. Taylor

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