

Articles

Robin Henig. "Animal Experimentation - The Battle Lines Soften" in Bioscience Vol. 29, 145-148, 195-196, 1979.

Henig's article is a "balanced" piece of science journalism which explores the emerging debate between scientists on both sides of the animal welfare/animal research issue. The new factor here is the appearance of more and more scientists on the welfare side of the fence. She covers the issues of normality in laboratory animals (environmental and psychological factors affect "normal" behavior and physiology), the scientific justification for using animals, the arguments over high school science fair abuses, the LD50 test, alternatives, new tactics by research groups, proposed legislation, and a study conducted by the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems on the adequacy of grant applications' attention to welfare issues. It is perhaps inevitable that there should be short-comings in such an article. The arguments are quoted accurately but the protagonists were obviously well aware that they were talking to the press.

The comments on the LD50 test are superficial and relatively unconvincing to anyone with some knowledge of the test. It is perhaps pertinent to note that the Swedish Medical Research Council has decided that there are sufficient concerns about the test to organize an international symposium to discuss what might be done. Henig's article has also been overtaken by events

of the last two years. For example, the Draize eye irritancy test has been the focus of a major campaign by animal welfare groups leading to significant research funds being committed to seek a non-animal alternative, with Revlon leading the way. Also, the government guidelines on how the test should be conducted have been changed to reflect all the humane concerns. In Congress, the Research Modernization Act has drawn a lot of attention to the subject of alternatives and the National Institutes of Health have been forced to organize a symposium covering selected aspects of the topic. In the fray itself, the National Society for Medical Research has been undergoing considerable internal upheavals and a new and more progressive competitor, Research Animal Alliance, has entered the field.

Despite this, Henig's article is well done for the genre and provides a good overview of a number of pertinent issues. If it is to be used for instruction though, it would be wise to point out that there have been many developments since it appeared.

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