

THE ALTERNATIVES EXPLOSION

Extracts from the Animal Rights International Coalitions Co-ordinator's (Henry Spira) Report for 1988.

Partly as a result of our efforts, twelve leading toxicology directors met at a widely publicised meeting in Princeton, New Jersey on April 9, 1987, along with representatives from federal regulatory agencies, to assess accomplishments and examine what needs to be done to replace animals in acute toxicity testing.

One outgrowth of this meeting which we believe will have far-reaching effects, is a joint initiative by leading toxicologists from Mobil, Hoffmann-La Roche and Exxon. Earlier this year, they issued an invitation to all major industrial toxicology labs to share any procedures which have immediate practical application. The technology transfer will be handled so that proprietary information will not be threatened, thus increasing participation in the project.

We feel that when scientists of this stature become involved, a large part of the battle is already won. The search for and implementation of alternatives is now part of the agenda of the nation's leading toxicologists.

CONVERGING FORCES IN TOXICOLOGY CORPORATE INITIATIVES

Proctor & Gamble (P&G) has tenaciously pursued regulatory acceptance of its alternative to the classic LD 50 and has actively fostered, in conjunction with our efforts, corporate/regulatory meetings to assess alternatives to the Draize rabbit eye test. P&G is funding the development of non-animal tests for birth defects, cancer-causing effects, lung damage, cell damage, eye irritation, skin and respiratory allergy. Also, P&G is arranging presentations on alternatives directed towards the industrial, academic and regulatory sectors.

Mobil Corporation has developed a computerised system which permits 95-98 per cent of new formulations to be approved without new animal testing. In addition, they have replaced much of their traditional chronic skin cancer testing on animals with a bacterial test. At Mobil alone, this alternative can save 30,000 animals per year.

Colgate Palmolive reported a reduction in animal use of 80 per cent over a 6 year period and has established an 'Alternatives Research' post-doctorate fellowship program in association with the Society of Toxicology.

Hoffmann-La Roche has developed and implemented an intensive review process during which research proposals involving animals are evaluated and refined prior to final review — measures which have allowed Roche to report a decrease in animal use of 67 per cent over a seven-year period.

Avon has reported a reduction in animal use of 72 per cent over the last six years, in part through the use of a computer system that allows their researchers to approve more than 90 per cent of all new formulae without conducting additional animal tests. The company is also funding a three-year contact allergy testing project which, because of recent advances in immunology, Avon researchers feel will be an

area where alternatives can rapidly be implemented.

Bristol-Myers' initiatives include establishing mutagenicity screens which eliminate animal testing on materials that would ultimately prove unmarketable, a non-animal assay which assures the absence of fever-inducing properties and replaces the old live rabbit test, and a computer chromatographic technique which replaces animals in tests for vitamins D and K in nutritional products.

US FEDERAL INITIATIVES

The National Institutes of Health will be allocating \$1 million towards reducing the pain and suffering of lab animals — a clear signal to the biomedical research community that this is now an area of serious concern.

The Consumer Products Safety Commission is also reassessing its policy on alternatives. CPSC Chairman, Terrence Scanlon, recently stated, 'The Commission is reviewing the feasibility of accepting alternative tests for particular product categories or chemical classes *as they are validated* rather than waiting for universal alternatives.' The demand that an alternative be valid for all chemicals has been a major stumbling block in the practical acceptance of alternatives.

The National Cancer Institute has developed a new test-tube screen in which large numbers of substances are tested for activity against a variety of human cancer cells. Not only is the screen cheaper and more specific than the old test, but it greatly reduces the number of lab animals used while increasing the number of potential anti-cancer compounds tested to 10,000-20,000 per year.

On a similarly massive scale, the **National Toxicology Program** is making significant strides towards replacing and reducing the use of animals through a program aimed at developing and validating new methods of identifying environmental health hazards.

But despite this progress some recent events dramatically spotlight that much remains to be done.

Major corporations and trade associations have committed tremendous resources towards defeating state legislation to ban the LD 50 and Draize tests. Unfortunately, most corporations and trade associations are not marshalling similar high energies towards developing, validating and implementing alternatives.

Biosearch, a contract lab, has recently been accused by PETA [see *AL Magazine* issue No.26] of subjecting conscious animals to painful and unnecessary procedures and for failing to provide animals with adequate food and water.

Several years ago, following a campaign which generated much public outrage, the Department of Defense ceased shooting dogs and cats and switched to less popular pigs and goats, a move that surprisingly was hailed by some animal protectionists as a victory. Now it has been reported that the DOD is again shooting hundreds of cats in federally funded ballistic brain injury experiments at the Louisiana State University.

Clearly, there is a need to beware of illusory victories and follow up on campaigns to assure measurable and lasting change.