

# Letters

## Animal Suffering: Ethical Dimensions

Your comments about my discussion with Professor Dollery (over poisoning monkeys with paraquat) at the British As-

sociation for the Advancement of Science Meeting on January 26 (*Int J Stud Anim Prob* 3(3):254, 1983) are a little misleading. I did not imply that because the human patients were mainly suicide victims we should be any less concerned about helping them. I was merely making a point about *suffering* in animal experiments.

What I actually said, and I quote now from the official *BA Report of the Proceeding*, was:

*The question I put when I gave this example was that I think there is a real ethical dilemma here, and I do not think it goes away by simply explaining why we did the experiment. It has been pointed out that the people dying from paraquat poisoning suffer severely. The animals dying from paraquat suffer extremely. I am asking what is the moral difference between animal suffering and human suffering. Peter Singer, whom I referred to, makes out a case for animal rights not on the premise that humans and animals are not different, but that the differences between them when considering the sorts of cases that we are considering, where we are inflicting suffering, are not morally relevant. It seems to me that the two alternatives - an animal dying in severe agony or a person dying in severe agony through an attempted suicide - pose a very real moral dilemma. I am not saying that I have any answers to it but I do think I have a right to put the question.*

Professor Dollery also missed the point.

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## **Firm Support for Culture Training**

I notice that in a recent issue of the *Journal* (3(3):185, 1982) "alternatives" in Canada were discussed. There is, unfortunately, one small error in your report regarding support for Dr. Sergey Fedoroff's tissue culture training course at the University of Saskatchewan. As you may be aware, the course for several years was supported by grants from the Animal Welfare Foundation and the Canadian SPCA of Montreal.

In 1981, the Honourable John Roberts, Minister of State for Science and Technology, responded positively to the Canadian Council on Animal Care's (CCAC) request to the various federal and provincial government departments for support of the course on an annual basis, indicating that funds would be made available through the CCAC budget. Although the CCAC is co-funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), it was the Minister of State for Science and Technology who authorized the support by the CCAC of the tissue culture training program. This support was begun this past summer.

In passing, I would like to emphasize that the 1983 announcement for the tissue culture course has already been advertised. It will be held as a satellite program of the International Society for Neurochemistry's annual meeting in Saskatoon, July 22-29, 1983. (Contact Dr. S. Fedoroff, Department of Anatomy, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada S7N 0W0.)

I recognize that this is a small point, but I would like to keep the record straight with respect to interest in the development of alternatives, not only of NSERC, but also the singular interest of our Minister of State of Science and Technology.

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