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Whale Meat in the Japanese Diet

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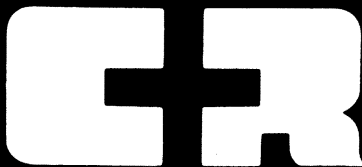
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viewing, anonymity must be an available option "for much the same reason that voting is done anonymously: to assure that judgements can be made freely and without fear of incurring prejudice or ill will" (2, p. 18). Moreover, the review process is never completely anonymous, because the editor or grant officer knows the reviewers' identities. More research should certainly be devoted to developing fairer and more objective methods of selecting reviewers (and perhaps also editors and grant officers), and authors' and grant applicants' rebuttals should certainly be taken into consideration in the review process. Individuals and organizations are working on these problems (3). But anonymous peer review should not be abandoned unless there is evidence that something better can take its place.

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Sakharov and Whistle-Blowing

The invidious treatment and persecution of Andrei Sakharov by the Soviet bureaucracy is a dramatic demonstration of the result of the collision of the individual conscience of a scientist with the inexorable intention of "policy-makers." Because of the tensions between the West and the Soviet Union at present, I fear that we shall overlook the principle of Sakharov's torment.

The principle, I believe, is that scientists are employees of bureaucracies and, according to the administrators, are employed to solve problems, not to create them. The concepts of free inquiry and that scientists may have consciences do not always penetrate the depths of the administrative mind; instead attempts are made to "deal" with the situation, usually resulting in dismissal, or loss of tenure, or internal exile. I know of no countries with significant numbers of scientists that have escaped the problem: consider the whistle-blowers at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare or the Department of Defense.

I hope my colleagues continue to pro-

test Sakharov's victimization, but with the understanding that it can happen in the United States, and does. Perhaps the National Academy of Sciences, in conjunction with the appropriate international organizations, could examine this dilemma in an effort to orient the scientist's role in society.

It seems essential to clarify, if not codify, the ethical and moral obligations of scientists to officialdom, since they may be different from those of the non-scientist. The Sakharov case is justification enough to establish an international organization (analogous to Amnesty International) to publicize the plight of scientists who have fallen afoul of officialdom because of their beliefs.

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Whale Meat in the Japanese Diet

Junghans (Letters, 4 Apr., p. 6) points out several errors in Beary's letter (14 Dec. 1979, p. 1260) regarding the high concentrations of mercury in whale meat eaten by the Japanese. We would like to call attention to some additional errors in Beary's letter.

Junghans is correct in stating that whale meat is now only an occasional source of protein in the Japanese diet. Furthermore, almost all of this meat is from baleen whales, not sperm whales. Only baleen whale meat is commonly available in Japanese food stores. Sperm whale meat is generally regarded as of low quality and distasteful. It is eaten in only a few local areas of Japan, in the vicinity of coastal whaling stations.

It is well known that sperm whale meat contains high levels of mercury (1, p. 44). In 1974, Nagakura *et al.* reported that the total mercury content of sperm whale meat ranged from 0.92 to 1.67 parts per million (ppm) and that about 70 percent of this was methyl mercury. However, they found that mercury levels in baleen whale meat were much lower, ranging from 0.01 to 0.07 ppm. Methyl mercury was not detected in any of the baleen whale meat sampled.

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