

news in brief

Cambridge animal demonstration: Protestors against the use of animals in scientific experiments will march through Cambridge, UK, on Saturday 5 May. The march has been organised by *Animal Aid*, and a spokesman for this organisation, Jean Pink, said their aim was to inform people about the 'horrific' and 'barbarous' experiments which were taking place in laboratories throughout the country. She said they picked Cambridge as the march venue because it was "the mecca of the scientific world and we want scientists to recognise our disapproval". *Animal Aid* want to see the end of all "cruel experiments" such as "depriving baby monkeys of their mothers at a very young age, and poisoning rabbits with chemicals" but they offer no alternative methods for scientists involved in this work. Marchers will assemble at Parker's Piece near the University Arms Hotel at 1.30 pm on 5 May and then march through the city centre. A meeting will take place afterwards at St Michael's Hall, Trinity Street, or on Parker's Piece if there are too many people. *Animal Aid* are expecting at least 300 people to attend the march. They have activist groups starting up all over the country, and may next demonstrate in Oxford and Reading.



"Every time the green light comes on they jeer and boo!"

New study shows cadmium danger in Shipham: A new study (*Lancet*, 21 April), sharply disagreeing with previous assessments, has shown clinical symptoms of kidney damage in Shipham residents exposed to cadmium from old mining tailings. Following the initial discovery of high environmental levels of cadmium (*Nature*, 25 January) Department of Health announcements and a pilot study headed by T. C. Harvey of the Department of Medicine at Birmingham University drew the conclusion that the situation was "broadly encouraging rather than alarming". The Harvey study was criticised by Professor Lars Friberg of the Department of Environmental Hygiene at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm (*Lancet*, 14 April), who emphasised that the levels found by Harvey's group in liver (up to 28 ppm) corresponded to 200-300 ppm in kidney cortex. These levels are in excess of levels set by the World Health Organisation for the first appearance of adverse effects of cadmium exposure. The new study, conducted by the Department of Clinical Pathology at the Maudsley Hospital, and financed by Thames TV, examined 31 residents of which 22 had abnormal cadmium and seven of whom were excreting the protein β_2 -microglobulin which is taken as a sign of kidney damage. Professor Malcolm Carruthers, Director of Clinical Pathology at the Maudsley says that the problem "needs to be looked at rapidly and with a fair degree of intensity".

India saves the tiger: India's six-year programme to save the tiger from extinction has paid off, according to reports at the First International Symposium on the Tiger held in New Delhi at the end of February. From the 1940s to around 1970, indiscriminate felling of forests, cutting of roads through forests, and the commercialisation of tiger hunting led to a severe depletion of the tiger population: in 1972 only an estimated 1,827 tigers remained in India. The Indian Government introduced a comprehensive Wild Life (Protection) Act in that year, making tiger killing a punishable offence. Project Tiger, funded by the Indian Government, and operated in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, was inaugurated in April 1973 and established eleven tiger reserves. The government's commitment is evident in its wholesale removal of villages in the core areas of tiger reserves: in the Kanha reserve alone 4,000 people from 20 villages have been rehoused at a cost of over a million rupees and more reserves are being planned. Another tiger census is being conducted this month, but the tiger population has already increased to 2,484 in its first five years. *From Zaka Imam in New Delhi.*

New WHO report moves to implement barefoot doctor campaign: A specialist committee of the World Health Organisation has proposed a strategy for the development of rural health teams so the goal of "Health for all by the year 2000" can be achieved (8 February). The committee bears in mind that "a permanent improvement in health is unlikely to be achieved without a corresponding improvement in the underlying social and economic conditions" so that a health worker's responsibility is not narrowly technical but also must include promoting healthier living conditions as part of their primary responsibility. WHO considers that the basic components of developmental health care consist of adequate lodging, food and water; suitable waste disposal; provision for pre-natal and post natal infant care including attention to nutrition; immunisation; and accurate health information. The report makes ten general recommendations including one that health workers should not be called "auxiliaries"—and proposes a nine-point national strategy for developing rural health teams.

Training and utilization of auxiliary personnel for rural health teams in developing countries. WHO Technical Report Series, 1978, No. 633 Sf 5.

NIH proposes risk assessment plan for recombinant DNA research: The US National Institutes of Health has announced details of a proposed programme to assess the risks of research involving recombinant DNA techniques, as it had been requested to do so by the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Mr Joseph Califano.

The proposed risk assessment programme, which has been published for public comment, focuses on three types of host-vector systems on which data will be obtained: prokaryotic host-vector systems, primarily *E. coli* and *Bacillus subtilis*; lower eukaryotes, namely *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and *Neurospora crassa*; and eukaryotic viruses in cultured cells of higher eukaryotes.

To implement the risk assessment programme and co-ordinate research activities, it is proposed that the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases should appoint an eminent scientist as special assistant to the director. The NIH also proposes that NIAID should set up a Laboratory of Microbial Virulence at Frederick, Maryland, to provide a long-range base for self-initiated risk assessment experiments requiring high containment technology.