mittee staff consulted groups such as the American Physiological Society and the Association of American Medical Colleges when drafting the bill, as well as animal welfare groups such as the Humane Society of America. The bill was reported out of the subcommittee on 9 June by a 14–1 vote.

Universities still have two strong objections, however, that may be raised in the full committee and may prevent any action being taken. One is that the standards set by the bill are quite high. For one thing, the new legislation would apply to rats and mice, which were exempted from the Animal Welfare Act. (Farm animals would continue to be exempt under the new bill.) Research facilities would also have to be accredited by an organization such as the American Association for the Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC), which since 1965 has certified about 400

facilities under a voluntary programme. Universities claim that it would cost $500 million to bring the remaining NIH-supported universities up to the very high AAALAC standards.

This objection may be answered in part by a 10-year phase-in provision, which the subcommittee staff says should allow much of the upgrading (installation of new ventilation equipment, for example) to be done in the course of routine laboratory modernization and repair.

The second objection is that research facilities will have to set up animal studies committees and in particular will have to appoint one member from outside the university who is "primarily responsible for representing community concerns regarding the welfare of animal subjects". The committees would act much as human experimentation review committees do.

Balancing these possible objections, however, is an apparently growing recognition by the research community of the benefits that mandatory regulations will bring in terms of public reassurance — much as the recombinant DNA guidelines provided what one scientist calls an "umbrella of trust". This may be especially important now that the effectiveness of the Animal Welfare Act and the essentially voluntary system have been called into question.

Stephen Budiansky

US science societies

Women's rights boycott shadow

St Louis

Although the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the US Constitution has now failed, many states will continue to be deprived of important scientific conferences for years to come. And it is possible that some societies will continue to boycott the fifteen states that dragged their heels on the amendment.

The amendment would have added to the constitution an interdiction of discrimination on the grounds of sex. By the extended deadline of 30 June, however, only 35 of the required 38 states had ratified the amendment, which thus becomes a dead letter.

The boycott was first organized in 1977 by the National Organization for Women (NOW), the most prominent feminist organization in the United States. Convention promoters in non-ratifying states have admitted they lost millions of dollars' worth of business during the ERA boycott. Convention sites in ratified states and Canada benefited.

How societies will respond to the lapsing of ERA is not yet clear. Some have abandoned the boycott, but others with large numbers of women members or which are otherwise committed to equal rights for women and minorities are ambivalent about giving their convention business to non-ratifying states.

The scientific societies that adopted the NOW boycott, and avoided Missouri, Illinois and some southern states none of which ratified ERA (see box), include the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the American Society for Cell Biology, the Society for Neuroscience, the Society for Developmental Biology, the Endocrine Society, the American Astronomical Society and the Biophysical Society. But AAAS stresses that its policy on meetings is independent of NOW's boycott.

No complete list of boycotting societies exists, but if the experience of Professional Associates of St Louis is typical, fewer than half of all scientific organizations supported the boycott. Professional Associates handles convention planning for nine science groups, of which three supported the boycott. Of those three, two decided to drop the boycott in booking meeting sites after 30 June.

NOW itself has not decided whether to keep the boycott going past the deadline, but the question is likely to come up at its board meeting in July. Even if NOW formally ends the boycott, it will affect where organizations hold meetings for several years if only because many societies make their meeting plans years in advance.

AAAS, the Society for Neuroscience and the American Psychiatric Association are booked only in ratified states until the end of 1986, the Biophysical Society until 1985 and the American Society for Cell Biology until 1984. The boycott excluded some of the most popular convention sites in the United States such as Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, St Louis, Kansas City and Las Vegas.

Some other societies did not honour the boycott only because it was logistically too difficult. The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), for example, says it would have liked to have supported the boycott but "The federation's meetings are so large — 15,000 to 20,000 people — we require 50–60 simultaneous meeting rooms. Only one or two cities in ratified states can provide that." The FASEB meeting was held this year in New Orleans in Louisiana, which like most other southern states has not ratified ERA. But two of the six member societies of FASEB, the American Society of Biological Chemists and the American Association of Immunologists, do honour the boycott when they meet as separate groups.

AAAS acknowledges that it has been inconvenienced by its stand, especially when it switched its 1979 meeting from Chicago to Houston in order to hold the meeting in a ratified state. "It's always inconvenient to move a meeting in less than a year's time. We had to be in several different places in Houston." AAAS meetings can draw 4,000 to 8,000 people.

Non-ratifying states

The 15 states that did not ratify ERA are: **Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia.**

Germal Sanderson, vice-president for sales of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, acknowledged that cancellation of business meetings had caused "significant losses". He estimated that 23 groups cancelled previously scheduled meetings, costing the city more than $11 million. The effect of the ERA boycott could last until 1989, he said.

Nobody knows if the boycott helped or hurt the movement to ratify ERA. People representing boycotted convention areas agree that it did not help the ratification effort and may have hurt it.

Jim Hutchinson, director of convention sales for the New Orleans Convention Bureau, says "It was ridiculous to begin with. It inconvenienced a lot of people and not another state has ratified since it started". NOW itself does not know if the boycott swung any legislators' votes its way. "It certainly was effective in terms of dollars lost" says Judy Murphy, NOW press secretary. "But if it helped, it was just one or many things we did."

Karen Freeman

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