

US animal welfare

Sweet reason emerges

Washington

THE National Academy of Sciences has begun once again its periodic revision of the official *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, and last week held the first of three open hearings that were remarkable for their lack of rancour — an apparent legacy of some of the compromising that took place during last year's attempt to revise federal legislation governing the use of research animals.

The *Guide*, whose recommendations are binding upon recipients of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants, is generally viewed as a model standard although the federal government has no general authority to enforce it.

At last week's hearing, animal welfare advocates struck a low key, focusing on a relatively narrow range of issues. Mrs Christine Stevens of the Animal Welfare Institute, a moderate group seeking reform rather than abolition of research involving animals, asked for a revision of rules on the exercise of animals (noting that dogs that have been previously housebroken especially need exercise outside their cages), and urged the academy committee to emphasize the need for researchers to ensure that euthanized animals are dead before disposing of them. She also noted the tendency of researchers to view the *Guide* as the "bible", and asked that cage-size recommendations be considered as minimum standards, not gospel.

Mr Howard Brown of the National Association of Life Science Industries, a trade group representing private testing

laboratories, concentrated on ventilation standards that the industry felt were not scientifically justified. But Brown also touched upon the issue that goes to the heart of the differences between researchers and welfare advocates when he made a plea for retaining the basic principle of "professional judgement" which is repeatedly invoked in the current *Guide*. The welfare advocates tend to the view expressed by Dr Donald Barnes of the National Antivivisection Society: "Stop guiding and start directing".

This issue is also central in the renewed efforts at legislative reform. Senator Robert Dole (Republican, Kansas) has introduced a bill (S.657) that would require as a matter of regulation that all institutions receiving federal research funds — and all federal agencies — should adhere to standards such as those in the *Guide*. The bill does answer two points raised last year by the research community, however: it drops last year's proposed requirement that institutions be accredited by a group such as the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care — which NIH said would cost \$500 million — and it specifically excludes any regulation of research design. It retains, however, the controversial requirement that institutions should establish animal care committees with at least one outside member to represent the interests of the humane community and that the committee should conduct semiannual inspections of all animal facilities.

Stephen Budiansky

Czechoslovak pollution

Past sins now whitewashed

TALK of pollution has at last become respectable in Czechoslovakia. Economic planners are concerned about the effects of pollution, including acid rain, on the country's forestry industry and industrial pollution, which five years ago could be discussed only in the underground press, has now reached the pages of even the Party daily *Rude Pravo*. Last month, the paper presented an alarming report on the pollution threat to Czechoslovakia's vital timber industry, noting that almost one-third of the forests of the Czech Socialist Republic were seriously affected by pollution.

According to what *Rude Pravo* described as "an analysis made by experts", the affected areas show between 10 and 70 per cent damage. In the worst hit areas, moreover, total clearance has been necessary, seriously disrupting the "extra-productive" or leisure use of the forests. In many areas, such as the Krusne mountains, the planting of strains of trees selected on the basis of expert results as most likely to resist adverse conditions has proved less "efficient" than originally estimated. Even these superior trees, it seems, cannot cope with present pollution levels.

The first official acknowledgement of the situation came at the end of last year, when it was noted that the state forestry industry would have to cut back on its annual cull of 11.7 million m² of timber to allow for the estimated annual loss of 600,000 to 800,000 m² to pollution damage. Last month's *Rude Pravo* article brought the whole matter into the open, identifying Czechoslovakia's lignite-fuelled thermal power stations as the major source of pollution and drawing attention to the secondary threat to the affected trees of insect damage, in particular by the fir sawfly.

In accordance with the usual principles of socialist realism, the full story has not been made public without the promise of remedial measures. Thus the state press agency CTK announced soon after publication of the *Rude Pravo* article that the Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences had developed a selective vanadium-based catalyst to deal with pollution by nitrogen oxides. The system is claimed to deal with 90 per cent of the nitrogen oxides in 120,000 m³ of gas emission an hour and is said already to have been installed in the North Bohemian Chemical Combine at Lovosice. CTK says that nitrogen oxide emission from the plant has been reduced by more than 4,000 tonnes per year and direct damage estimated at 7 million Czechoslovak crowns a year prevented.

Nothing has been said about remedial measures for sulphur dioxide pollution.

Vera Rich

No trips for Sakharov

ANDREI Sakharov's sixty-second birthday last Saturday was honoured in the United States by a special law which established it as "National Sakharov Day", and was commemorated by meetings and rallies in several European capitals. But the celebrations, honouring Sakharov's achievements in physics and human rights, were overshadowed by the decision of the Soviet authorities a few days earlier that Sakharov will not be allowed to leave the Soviet Union, because he still possesses sensitive defence-related information.

Since Sakharov's security clearance for classified information was withdrawn 15 years ago, the decision could be interpreted as casting an extremely doubtful light on the rate of Soviet military progress. In fact, it is clearly a formal excuse, designed to counter rumours during the past few weeks that Sakharov would be allowed to emigrate to take up a visiting lectureship at the University of Vienna.

Although the early reports cited anonymous and untraceable "diplomatic sources", on 8 May, Moscow radio's

Swedish service quoted the Minister of Justice, Vladimir Terebilov, as giving a broad hint that Sakharov could leave if he so wished. When Sakharov refused to go to Norway to receive his Nobel peace prize, said Terebilov, it was on his own initiative and "no one prevented him from travelling". Three days later, TASS stated in unequivocal terms that his former access to classified information excluded any possibility of even a brief foreign trip.

Sakharov himself, and his wife Elena Bonner, do not seem to have accepted the TASS announcement as final. During the past few days, Mrs Bonner has told foreign correspondents in Moscow that she fears for her husband's life, and called on the West to increase its pressure on his behalf. She said Sakharov now feels so isolated in his Gor'kii exile that he considers no further purpose can be served by his remaining voluntarily in the Soviet Union. The invitation which he would accept, however, is not the rumoured Vienna appointment, but one from the University of Oslo.

Vera Rich