bouts. The logic of the numbers is that it would be just as worthwhile to spend $100,000 to keep a kilogram of CFCs out of the atmosphere. If only the gathering at Rio would offer a bounty of that order for the recovery of CFCs, it would kill three birds with one stone: governments would have an incentive to sign the Montreal Protocol, the greenhouse problem would be abated and the surface of the Earth would be quickly stripped clean of discarded refrigerators. Might not that prospect allow distinguished delegates (in UN-speak) stretch out on Rio's beaches with a sense of a job well done? □

Thirty years back

Britain's new government has an unexpectedly intelligent recipe for managing research.

NOT for the first time in Britain, a newly elected government has stolen its defeated opponent's clothes. Last week, the new Major government quietly launched a radical reorganization of its mechanism for the support of science, and for basic science in particular. Despite masterly pretence, before and during the general election, that all is well, Major has made the organizational change first demanded in 1981 by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, and widely echoed (by *Nature*'s manifesto, for example) ever since. Indeed, there will be a minister (Mr William Waldegrave) part-time in charge of research spending (he also has to worry about redress for short-changed consumers of public services). He will be sited in the Cabinet Office, which implies access to the prime minister, as the defeated Labour Party had been promising. Labour's complaints of robbery, if any, will quickly be drowned by huzzas for consensuality.

This change takes the politics of British science back 30 years, when there was last a minister of science (part-time), even down to the details. (Waldegrave, like his predecessor, Lord Hailsham, is also a fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford.) It remains to be seen whether the new arrangements will include a more effective and independent advisory body than the present Advisory Board for the Research Councils, whose chief task (dividing the annual budget-pie among five research councils and the Royal Society) is not enough to keep able people constructively occupied without bickering. The need is for a more independent council, free to pronounce on what it chooses, preferably in public. Lord Todd, chairman from 1952 to 1964 of what was then the Advisory Council on Science Policy (ACSP), would no doubt happily advise.

There are several good reasons why Waldegrave should give that wheeze a try, not the least of which is that the present pitiful morale of the British research enterprise owes much to the way in which its professionals have been pushed about, in the past decade, by seemingly arbitrary decisions by ministers and their acolytes. Throughout that time, there has been no sense of dialogue with the government, but a sense only that orders have been issued and must be obeyed. Nothing could help more in present circumstances than giving a dozen or so people a statutory right to bring up with the minister questions that seem important to the research community. But the dialogue would, in the nature of these things, prove fruitful (as the experience of the ACSP showed). A well-run council would not just be a lightning-rod for discontent, but a way of telling more accurately than for a decade what should be done. □

Leave the man alone

The argument between researchers and the animal rights movements go back a long way.

"I KNOW that physiology cannot progress except by means of experiments on living animals, and I feel the deepest conviction that he who retards the progress of physiology commits a crime against mankind." Who could possibly have written that? There are a few intrinsic clues. Not merely is the message not politically correct, but neither is the language: the author's use of "he who" rather than "anyone who" is archaic. The use of "physiology" suggests a date before "pharmacology" was invented. And the liberal use of "progress", both as a verb and as a noun, would place the text (which is in English) somewhere between 1832 (the Great Reform Bill) and 1918 (the end of the Age of Innocence). But who said it?

Those who have read this far will recognize that they have been led up the garden path. Charles Darwin was the author. Professor Paul J. Whalen from the University of Vermont at Burlington has written to draw attention to the appearence of this opinion in *Nature* on 21 April exactly a century ago (**45**, 583; 1892). Whalen's worry is that Darwin is now often referred to by those active in the cause of animal rights as one who would naturally have been a paid-up member of their organizations if he had not inconsiderately died: for was it not Darwin's triumph to have shown that the difference between people and animals is one only of degree?

We forget that, while time passes, some contentious issues remain unchanged. Darwin, in his letter, refers to the "agitation against physiologists" in earlier years and says, "I have all my life been a strong advocate for humanity to animals, and have done what I could in my writings to enforce this duty." He wonders "how many lives and what a fearful amount of suffering have been saved by the knowledge of parasitic worms through the experiments of Virchow and others on living animals". That was a century ago. It may be too much to ask that the extremists should spend the time between their demonstrations and laboratory burglaries in totting up the numbers of lives since saved, and the suffering avoided (now quantifiable in dollars through damage suits), but will they not please plead Darwin's support for their disruptive causes? □

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