DNA ban may cause Baltimore exit

By Mark James

Nobel laureate Professor David Baltimore and several other MIT biology majors have decided to leave the Institute if an extension of the Cambridge moratorium on recombinant DNA research is approved.

Baltimore, American Cancer Society Professor of Microbiology, said: "I hold very strongly that the city council have to prepare a study of its hazards."

Associate Professor of Biology Philip Sharp, who has also planned recombinant work, said: "I was absolutely flabbergasted" by Baltimore's statements, but added that leaving MIT to do this research would be one of his options if the ban was extended.

"I don't want to have to make that decision," he stated, adding that "many things would be taken into account" in making it.

Recombinant DNA research involves the combination of DNA from an organism of interest, such as man, with that of another organism, and the multiplication of the combined segment within the bacterium E. coli. The technique can be used to produce large amounts of any DNA segment for study.

Those interested in doing such work hope that it may yield insights into the mechanism of cancer, but opponents fear that the new organisms formed in the process may provide uncontrolled hazards.

Assistant Professor of Biology David Houseman confirmed Baltimore's assessment. Recombinant DNA work is "a vital part of what I'm trying to do," he added.

Houseman said he would seriously consider leaving if such work was prohibited here. A person must "weigh a lot of different issues" before deciding, he explained.

Houseman said that the ban already had had a negative impact on new workers coming to MIT.

Professor of Biology Harvey Lodish, who was now unable to do hazardous P2 classes of experiments due to the moratorium, said that Baltimore's statements were "absolutely true." If the ban is extended, he said: "I suspect people will either openly violate the moratorium or take it to court."

Lodish added that a Harvard researcher may take another position, but that the decision was complicated by "the unlikelihood that he would be able to begin work. Baltimore and the recombinant DNA research is central to modern biology," and that no one would stay if they were unable to do it.

Opponents of this research such as Associate Professor of Biology Jonathan King say that it is important for scientists' freedom to be "open-minded" about their procedures. "There are other safer methods of research that would yield the same results, although perhaps more slowly," he said.

King also said that he considered the NIH guidelines, which set up procedures to contain the experimental organisms within the laboratory, "quite safe."

Boston's Central Artery, the underground highway linking Charlestown and South Boston, is now 70 feet under the ground if State Transportation Secretary Frederick P. Sahlman plans his proposed system. The total cost of the project would be around $1.5 million.

Massachusetts State Public Works Commissioner John J. Carroll has announced that his department will minimize its one percent cut in the state budget because of excess water supplies in the state. High blood pressure. Studies have shown that a rise in sodium concentration caused by salt wash can lead to heart trouble, cirrhosis of the liver, and other ailments.

A recent survey prepared by the National Association for Law Placement concludes that there is an "improving job market" for law students graduating from law schools approved by the American Bar Association. The survey shows that more than 90 percent of the 1975 law graduates found jobs six to eight months after graduation, a significant increase over the figure for previous year's class.

The other resolution discussed at the meeting resolves that "the Undergraduate Association condems the placement of sculptures and art works on living spaces will be voted on at the next meeting of the Undergraduate Association General Assembly."

Before the GA is an amendment that will ensure the independence of the Interfraternity Conference and Dormitory Council constitutions from the UA constitution.

These proposals were discussed at a GA meeting on November 22, but could not be put to a vote because only 24 students attended the meeting; a quorum of 30 is required for the GA to conduct business.

The resolution on East Campus states that the GA "deplores any intent to prosecute students." The writer of the resolutions, Fern Crandall '78, said that "Campus Police would love to do a lot of protesting to the administration, because they don't want to get involved in it." She furthered the idea stated in the resolution, that the "past few years' rapport between the East Campus residents and Campus Police could easily be adversely affected by investigation or unjust persecution of members, which has been suggested at the meeting that the resolution should include the statement: "the GA deplores the painting of Transparent Horizons, "

By Daniel A. Nathan

Two resolutions involving the "persecution of East Campus residents and the placement of sculptures and art works on living spaces will be voted on at the next meeting of the Undergraduate Association General Assembly."

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