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Congress to debate laws regulating DNA

By Mark James

Disclosed potential of DNA research has shifted to the federal level while the research and the mechanisms for its regulation are off to a slow start in Cambridge.

The House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment has begun reviewing a bill regulating this research, which involves the splicing of genes from different organisms.

The research has generated controversy because some scientists have expressed fears that the new combination of genes produced will be used by the experiments to make these bacteria dangerous.

The House Committee’s initial draft draws on the National Institutes of Health, and subject, and Welfare to make changes in these guidelines and to enforce them through licensing.

An interagency study group in the Carter administration has proposed similar regulations, except that it would have the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to set limits on the kinds of research that can be done.

The Senate Health Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), has drafted a bill which outlines the extent of its involvement with campus activities so that the University can get the dorms united... Right now, each dorm, if it has a grievance, goes to the IFC and the Dormitory Council independent. I think it was because the resolution was worded perhaps not as we had intended. We’re going to try and introduce another one, which will basically say that Dormcon and IFC should be the mediators of disputes between the dormitories and the fraternities, and that the decisions of Dormcon and the IFC should not be appealed. The GA should not only be used if Dormcon and IFC cannot resolve disputes between themselves. I think we would like to be independent of the Undergraduate Association and we’re trying to do that.

The Tech: The administration had many people who speak for their views whenever a major issue comes up such as overcrowding in dorms and Tennis. What should be the organized means for gathering student opinion on things where students are interested?

Lou: I think Phil Moore’s idea of Open Forums is really a very good idea of getting students to come to issues which interest them and try to get things expanded a little more for issues which they are not so controversial.

I think another way is the “grassroots” system, just going out and talking to students and finding out what their opinions are.

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