DRUG REGULATIONS

Drug Abuse Reinterpreted

Ever since a law to curb drug abuse became effective in 1965, the Food and Drug Administration has been keeping track of who takes sedatives or stimulants, how often and how much.

Drug companies are required to take regular inventories of barbiturates and amphetamines, often taken for kicks by narcotics addicts. Pharmacists record every sale and refill prescriptions no more than five times. Doctors must recertify prescriptions every six months.

The Drug Abuse Control Amendments brought into line not only powerful and potentially dangerous tranquilizers and stimulants but also any drug containing a sedative or stimulant in combination with something else. Including all these combination products in the regulations has proved more of a headache than a cure in many cases. Pharmacists have been turned into prolific record-keepers and patients on long-term therapy have been inconvenienced by the need to get prescriptions refilled over and over again.

The first of April will bring an end to all this, however. FDA last week released the names of 331 combination products to be exempted from the controls by reason of the fact that they are not, after all, a threat to public health. In 13 months a panel of physicians has reviewed 500 combination drugs and still has untold numbers to go. Those drugs recently exempted were found to contain sedatives or stimulants in such small amounts that they are not likely to do harm and certainly wouldn't give anyone a kick, a spokesman for FDA said. Therefore, they are not much of a lure to abusers.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Foreign Scientists Advise

Scientists from around the world have been invited to come to Washington to advise the Congress on "Government, Science and International Policy."

With the world becoming ever more tightly bound together, and science ever more vital to its affairs, the House Committee on Science and Astronautics has called in qualified men with different backgrounds to discuss some of the problems that will be coming up. They will join in a seminar with American counterparts, regular advisers to the committee.

Among those who will give papers and participate in the discussions are:

Kankuro Kaneshige, Science Adviser to the Japanese Premier and co-chairman of the United States-Japan Committee on Scientific Cooperation. He will speak on "Modern Evolution of Science and Technology in Japan."

H. W. Julius, Director, Central Organization for Applied Scientific Research, The Netherlands. His topic: "Government-Industry Partnership in Scientific Applications."

Donald F. Hornig, Director, U.S. Office of Science and Technology. "World Comity Through Science and Technology."

Pierre Aigrain, Director of Higher Education, France. "Science and Education in Europe Today."

Hussain Zaheer, Director, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, India. "Meeting National Needs Through Science and Technology."

Carlos Chagas, President of the Academy of Sciences, Brazil and Unesco representative, "Science and Technology in Latin America."

Also invited to the sessions are:

Dzherman M. Gvishiani, Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology, U.S.S.R.; Andre deBolnay of Switzerland, Secretary General of the International Parliamentary Union; Robert Major, Director of the Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and Frank J. Malina, an American Trustee of the International Academy of Astronautics in Paris.

PUBLIC POLICY

Research Policies Hit

A top-rank government scientist, just retired, last week attacked government science administration.

"Vital scientific programs are threatened by dangerous trends and controls that could be disastrous to them," declared Dr. Robert M. Page, former chief scientist and director of research at the Naval Research Laboratory.

"A complete lack of confidence is being shown in the integrity and judgment of responsible operating officials which will certainly lead to bad management of Federal programs," he said.

Dr. Page, a physicist, made important contributions to radar and pioneered in space exploration and rocket astronomy. As an administrator, he managed NRL as it gained wide reputation for excellent work.

Tight restrictions on travel funds and overtime, arbitrary ceilings on the number of higher-paying jobs, and uninformed budget cuts were cited by Dr. Page as "self-defeating, tying the hands of managers, hampering the work, eliminating judgment in decision making, and failing to save money as they are reputed to do."

Travel fund restrictions, Dr. Page declared, prevent scientists from attending professional meetings, which are essential to their work. These sessions are important to the on-the-job training of professional people. Scientists who aren't trained in developments in their fast-changing fields, Dr. Page said, soon lose their usefullness, and he fears this may start to happen in government.

The "fetish" of overtime reduction, Dr. Page continued, has "led to a dangerous, critical situation" in government science. It is often economical to pay overtme to teams of government employes on field trips, he said, rather than keep them in the field for a longer period.

Arbitrary ceilings on the number of $15,000-a-year positions, he said, are most discouraging to the Federal scientific community. Recent studies show the salaries of private-sector scientists far outstrip those in government, yet the government prevents, by directive, merited appointments and promotions to high level positions. The responsible administrator, he said, has only restricted authority to reward those who perform high quality work.

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