

developed highly complex social organizations, agriculture and stock-raising; in view of the disparity in the size of our brains, could we expect the ant to have art and music too? The Russells firmly reject the ant model and conclude this chapter, 'Given room and resources, freedom and peace are the natural heritage of man.' How much room, how many resources?

JOHN S. PRICE.

### THE LION CUB

**Cannabis. Report by the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence.** London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. 1968. Pp. 78. Price 7s. 6d.

Cannabis is news. Even without the appearance of what an eminent pharmacologist has called 'that scandalous example of suppression of truth and suggestion of falsehood which appeared as an advertisement in *The Times*' in 1967, the widespread interest in this drug and its users made it inevitable that the Report prepared by the Hallucinogens Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence should have excited emotion and polemics. Both reactions were displayed *con brio* by the press and the House of Commons, but it is difficult to believe that many of the more vociferous commentators on the report produced by Lady Wootton's committee have studied the document with the care it deserves. In fewer than forty pages it outlines in a clear, sober and responsible manner the clinical, pharmacological, social and legislative aspects of a complex problem, paying due regard to current ignorance and future needs in a series of carefully framed recommendations. There are also a number of useful appendices, including a comprehensive review and bibliography of the international clinical literature by Sir Aubrey Lewis. A report to read and remember, and one to be savoured fully in conjunction with Hansard's account of the debate on Drug Dependence and Misuse in March 1969, when the Upper Chamber rose to the occasion and, in the words of Earl Jellicoe, '... the noble lioness ... defended her lion cub of a Report with that lucid, maternal ferocity which one would expect of her'.

MICHAEL SHEPHERD.

### SAFE GENERALITIES

**WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence.** Sixteenth Report (World Health Organization, Geneva, 1969). Pp. 28. Price 4s.

This sixteenth Report of the WHO Drugs Committee does not have anything very startling to say.

The Committee starts, in good liberal style, from the principle that if 'drug abuse or dependence is likely to be . . . only sporadic or infrequent in the population, if there is little danger of its spread to others, and if its adverse effects are likely to be . . . limited to the individual user, there is no public health problem . . .' On the other hand, 'if the drug dependence is associated with behavioural or other responses that adversely affect the user's interpersonal relations, or cause adverse physical, social or economic consequences to others as well as to himself', and if the problem is actually or potentially widespread in the population, 'then a public health problem does exist'.

From this the Report goes on to assess first psychic, then physical, dependence. Psychic dependence has been studied amongst three types of patient volunteers, namely (1) those with illnesses requiring continuing medication with or without persistent pain; (2) those with terminal illness, especially of a painful character, and (3) persons who are already drug dependent and have relapsed to drug abuse many times after periods of enforced abstinence and treatment. In these cases various experimental procedures have been employed, such as questionnaires to test subjective reactions, or electroencephalographic techniques, while experiments have also been made on animals. Up till now, however, no more can be claimed for these investigations than that they yield 'interesting and suggestive data' rather than any conclusive evidence as to psychic drug dependence in man. Techniques for the measurement of physical dependence, on the other hand, are much more advanced, and have established that the effects of morphine-like agents in monkeys and barbiturate-like agents in dogs are qualitatively very similar to those in man, and often show a good quantitative correlation as well—the crucial test being the abstinence syndrome.

On the need for drug control, the Report distinguishes between drugs which have, and those which have not, essential medical uses (incidentally, LSD is included in the latter category), and repeats that the determining factor must be the risk to public health in the case of each individual drug. At the same time 'sound decisions on control measures can be taken only if reliable and comprehensive data are available'—which more often than not is not the case. The practical problems are moreover aggravated by the continual appearance of new drugs upon the market.

There follows a review of the work of International Bodies concerned with Drug Dependence, beginning with a commendation of the fourteenth Report of the WHO Expert Committee on Mental Health,