

RB3.46

IN CONFIDENCE

CHIMPANZEES

Some further information that may assist in decision making has been gained by discussion with Dr Rosalind Ridley.

She says that careful study of Gajdusek's work shows no increased susceptibility of chimpanzees over New World Monkeys such as Squirrel Monkeys. She does not think it would tell you anything about the susceptibility to man. Also Gajdusek did not, she believes, challenge chimpanzees with scrapie as severely as we did pigs and we know little of that source of scrapie. Comparisons would be difficult. She also would not expect the Home Office to sanction such experiments here unless there was a very clear and important objective that would be important for human health protection. She doubted such a case could be made. If this is the case she thought it would be unethical to do an experiment abroad because we could not do it in our own country.

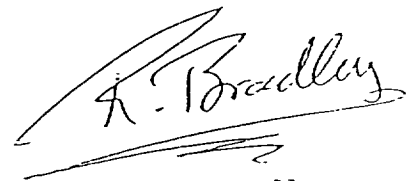
Retrospectively she feels they should have put up more marmosets than they did. They all remain healthy. They would normally regard the transmission as negative if no disease resulted in five years.

We are not being asked for a decision but I think that before we made one we should gain as much knowledge as we can. If we decided to proceed we would have to bear any criticisms for many years if there was an adverse view by scientists or media. This should not be undertaken lightly. There is already some adverse comment here, I gather, on the pig experiment though that will subside.

The Gibbs' (as distinct from Schellekers') study is somewhat different. We are merely supplying material for comparative studies in a laboratory with the greatest experience of human SEs in the world and it has been sanctioned by USDA (though we do not know for certain yet if chimpanzees specifically will be used). This would keep it at a lower profile than if we conducted such an experiment in the UK or Europe.

I consider we must have very powerful and defensible objectives to go beyond Gibbs' proposed experiments and should not initiate others just because an offer has been made.

Scientists have a responsibility to seek other methods of investigative research other than animal experimentation. At present no objective has convinced me we need to do research using Chimpanzees - a species in need of protection. Resisting such proposals would enable us to communicate that information to the scientist and the public should the need arise. A line would have been drawn.



R Bradley
26 September 1990

CVO ✓

cc Dr T W A Little ✓
Dr B J Shreeve ✓

1.10