

H. J. Muller Concerning acknow- It is difficult to understand
ledgements. the rationale of the announce-
ment on the cover of the cir-

cular that "material presented in this circular must not be used in publications without the specific permission of the author", as the obvious purpose of the circular is to furnish useful information for Drosophila workers for researches that they will publish. Every contributor must take it for granted that the data or suggestions which he allows to be distributed in the circular may be put to use. Surely the latter are not merely for the inner edification of the readers. Therefore it should be as unnecessary as it is impossibly cumbersome for every user of the material in the circular to have to write to every contributor involved every time he intends putting a bit of the material to use. To be sure, the injunction on the cover implies that the contributor's consent need be obtained only when the information is used "in publications". If, however, it should be obligatory for the user of the communicated material to obtain the consent of the author of the letter in mentioning it (presumably with acknowledgements) in a publication, it must surely be even more obligatory for the user not to secretly take the information given and use it without acknowledgements, in the obtaining of further data or conclusions which he then presents in a publication, for in the latter case the prerogative due the original contribution would be even more infringed upon. Clearly then such information used in work that reaches publication requires acknowledgement, but since, by the system proposed on the cover, all acknowledgements in publications require the consent of the first author, it would then become necessary for the consent of the author to be obtained for each occasion in which his material is used.

It would appear then that the actual ethics of the matter should be almost the opposite of that which seems to have been proposed in the announcement. That is, it should be assumed, firstly, that the information or suggestions in the circular should be used as freely as possible, without obtaining the consent of the contributor, as the latter gave them freely. It should be assumed, secondly, that exactly because the material was not presented in copyrighted form in an official publication, wherein the general scientific public could plainly see its source, it is incumbent upon him who uses it to acknowledge his use of it and the source from whom he obtained it when he publishes material of his own, in the development of which the use of the first mentioned material was involved. This matter, in other words, must be upon the same footing as in the case of material (data, conclusions or suggestions) passed on by word of mouth or by letter, where of course it is the most obvious and elementary principle of ethics that acknowledgement of the source must be made if the scientific material is put to published use. Of course it is not to be expected that acknowledgements need be made

in respect to the use of minutiae of technique etc. that the author would not think worth mentioning anyway, even in case he had originated them himself, not are acknowledgements to be expected where the material made use of and its source have already become generally known in some way, not where the points involved would be generally recognized as being quite obvious. Where on the other hand a method or result that would generally not be regarded as obvious, has been originated independently by a given worker, but parallels similar work or suggestions that have later become known to him through public or private, direct or indirect communications of another investigator, it is obvious that the former, in publishing his work, need not acknowledge assistance from the latter, but is nevertheless in duty bound to mention the fact that his method, conclusion or suggestion, though independent, is the same as that which he knows the other worker has also arrived at. Thirdly, far from the consent of the original author being required for acknowledgements, his consent should rather be required in case it is desired not to make mention of a communication of his which has played a role in work that the other author is publishing, and this requirement has much more pertinence in a case like that under consideration, where the communication was not made in an official publication, than where it was so made, since in the latter case the original author has, after all, a certain amount of protection in the words themselves. Only on such an understanding can contributors to the circular be expected to continue to furnish contributions, just as they would only (by word of mouth or letter), so long as such a standard of conduct was observed. Experience has shown that it is unfortunately only too true that such overt understandings must be reached beforehand, even in the case of scientists, in order that real cooperation may be possible.

H. J. Muller Concerning material to be published. It is not always possible to know at the time of sending in a contribution just whether or not the material will be published, or, if published, when, but it would seem wise to send it in to the circular anyway (supposing the policy on acknowledgements above outlined is accepted), provided the information or suggestions sent in might be of considerable use to the readers between the time of appearance of the circular and of the official publication. This would apply especially in cases where actual publication is only doubtful, or might be long delayed. In other words, it would seem wise not to limit the material in the circular in the manner stated, to material which is "not ordinarily suitable for publication", or to material, the publication of which is not expected at all. Certainly a good deal of the material in the last circular would be worth eventual publication.