

Reactions overseas to Australian insect export regulations. Search 5:417.

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Critics of Regulation 13A fear that it will damage the spirit of goodwill and co-operation now existing between entomologists and institutions in Australia

In February 1974, copies of two statements, 'Australian insect exports legislation' and 'Guidelines for the control of the export of insects (including ticks and spiders)' were sent to 40 senior foreign entomologists with a request for the recipients' thoughts on the legislation, and the effect it would have on his own work on Australian insects. These men had provided expert identification of insects for Queensland Primary Industries and Forestry Departments, Queensland Museum, and the Department of Entomology, University of Queensland, or had borrowed material from these institutions for revisionary studies, or had collected extensively in Queensland.

The 25 replies (from 9 countries) received can be summarized as follows:

20 had objections or doubts about the legislation; 5 raised none.

7 indicated that their work would be affected; 7 that theirs would not.

14 were sympathetic to the retention of holotypes in the country of origin provided longtime protection was assured; 4 pointed out that the legislation set a precedent for countries lacking in necessary facilities for preservation to demand retention of types for national prestige.

2 had signed holotype declarations, though 1 later withdrew at the request of his institution; 1 worked in an institution that had signed; 11 others had, by 'gentleman's agreement', returned or undertaken to return to Australia, holotypes designated from material they had collected in, or borrowed from, Australia; 7 commented on the ease with which holotypes can be borrowed from most institutions.

16 considered that study of the Australian fauna by overseas taxonomists would decline. Work on Australian insects would be phased out or at least the material in Australian collections would tend to be disregarded. The legislation would thus lead to fewer types being returned to Australia because they would be selected from material already in overseas collections. Most affected would be revisional work in poorly-known groups where biologically-

and overseas. Forty senior foreign entomologists were approached for their reactions to the new legislation.

based collecting by specialists in the groups is needed. Overseas institutions were unlikely to finance field work in Australia, and few outside entomologists could be expected to undertake it unless funded from Australian sources. Emphasis was placed on the need to encourage, not delay, study of the fauna when habitat destruction may lead to extinction of many palaeoendemic species of high systematic and evolutionary interest.

2 commented that the process of identifying material for Australians would become complicated, and 1 saw little reason to involve himself in the necessary red tape.

5 thought the legislation would adversely affect the relations of Australian entomologists with overseas entomologists and institutions. Objections were raised to an institution having to sign a holotype declaration, and an individual in it not being able to unless the institution agrees; 1 saw this as bordering on the issue of personal intellectual freedom; 1 suggested this clause could be used by a departmental head to force a staff member to stop working on Australian material; in another country, 1 whose institution refused to sign was told by his departmental head 'Why work on Australian insects?'; a departmental head felt that by signing for his institution he could prejudice the work of his associates and their successors in the event that from material he had exchanged, a holotype was later designated but not returned to Australia; 3 doubted that individuals signing could bind an institution and future generations of curators in perpetuity.

1 pointed out that institutions lending material require a signed undertaking that the borrower will return the specimens within a specified time, but Australian entomologists should add a phrase to the effect that the material will be returned subject to authorization of an approved person in Australia — a condition that may be unacceptable to the overseas lender.

3 commented to the effect that most countries depend on the free gift of skilled labour by interested people if

they are ever to have their animals classified.

The Commonwealth and States' Entomological Committee is said to have expressed its support for the objectives underlying the proposal from the Conference of Australian Museum Directors that led to this legislation. Both bodies must surely rate advancement of knowledge of the Australian fauna as more important than possible deposition of some holotypes in overseas institutions. Had they fully appreciated the deterrent effect of the legislation on systematic work on Australian insects it seems unlikely that the proposal would have been made. This enquiry among overseas entomologists has endorsed Talbot and Smithers' claim that in the interests of entomological science in Australia Regulation 13A should be removed as soon as possible.

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Erratum

HUBER, R. (1974) 'Land Tenure and Kinship in an Italian Farming Community', *Search* 5 (7) 291 and *Searchlight* No. 3, 'Australian Families', p.15.

The author wishes to point out that the summary heading her article — an editorial insertion — implied an erroneous definition of the term 'extended family':

'An extended family is a group in which all members live under one roof. This is the situation in Treviso but cannot, as was stated in the summary, occur in Griffith. Here customs have changed largely in response to the land-tenure regulations: people live in nuclear households but can call on numerous relatives who live close by.' —

Rina Huber