BACTERIOLOGICAL, NOMENCLATURE, AND TAXONOMY

THE TERMS GROUP, TAXONOMIC GROUP, AND TAXON
AND THE INTERNATIONAL BACTERIOLOGICAL CODE OF NOMENCLATURE
Proposal for Amendment to the International Bacteriological
Code of Nomenclature.

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THE INTERNATIONAL Bacteriological Code of Nomenclature recognizes clearly that in bacteriology the use of the word *group* in its several senses is a source of confusion and not infrequently leads to ambiguity. An endeavor to clarify the situation is found under Rule 8 relating to the names of subdivisions of species (other than subspecies) in Recommendation 8a, paragraph (3) which reads as follows:

(3). The term *group* in bacteriology should be used with great care so as to avoid ambiguity. It is employed popularly to designate various organisms with common characteristics (i.e. coliform Group) and, in a restricted sense, in antigenic analysis for designating species or subgenera (e.g. *Streptococcus* Group A Lancefield), or varieties or subspecies (e.g. *Neisseria intracellularis* Group I Scott). It is suggested that the term *group* be reserved for primary serological divisions and designated by capital letters. Any serological subdivisions within the group should be designated as *types*, serotypes and distinguished by Arabic numerals (e.g., *Bacterium pseudotuberculosis rodentium* Group A, Type [Serotype] 1 Schutze). The term *group* is also used

some 48 times in the International Bacteriological Code in a broader sense, meaning a taxonomic group, that is, the organisms included within any category of taxonomy. Species, genera, families, orders all are taxonomic groups.

It has been suggested that if another term than group or taxonomic group could be substituted in the broader use it would make for decrease in

confusion in terminology in bacteriology, and would tend to stimulate usage in the sense of Recommendation 8a.

Dr. Lam proposed (1) that a new coined work *taxon*, (plural *taxa*) from the Greek *τάξις* *taxis*, an orderly arrangement, be used in botany, and specifically in the botanical rules of nomenclature, to replace the terms taxonomic group or groups. The suggestion met with immediate favor and was approved by several national and international groups of botanists concerned with nomenclatural problems. The term has had wide acceptance as one which decreases ambiguity and increases accuracy. This use in the International Botanical Rules of Nomenclature was recommended to the Stockholm International Botanical Congress and was approved.

In view of the even greater possibility of confusion in the several uses of the work group in bacteriology, a proposal to substitute the work *taxon* (plural *taxa*) for the term taxonomic group or the term group when used with the connotation of taxonomic group whenever appropriate in the text of the International Bacteriological Code was prepared for consideration.

After some discussion by the International Committee on Bacteriological

(1) Lam, Proposal (1950-51) in Lanjournet, Synopses of proposals concerning the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature Submitted to the Seventh International Botanical Congress Stockholm, p 5, 1950.

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Nomenclature during the International Microbiological Congress in Rio de Janeiro, August, 1950, it was apparent that the consensus of opinion was to the effect that although the change may be desirable, nevertheless the word *taxon* is quite unfamiliar in bacteriology, and that its use should be authorized but not required. In order to implement this opinion, a motion was passed authorizing the insertion of *taxon* (or *taxa*) in parentheses after *taxonomic group* or *groups*, in the several paragraphs of the International Bacteriological Code of Nomenclature.

When the resolution was approved it was not recognized that this might require the inclusion of the parenthetical definition about fifty times. Obviously this redundancy was not the intent of the resolution.

The Editorial Board of the International Committee on Bacteriological Nomenclature was

empowered to formulate the exact phraseology of the amendment.

The Board of Editors believes that the objectives of the resolution can best be met by the introduction of a Note which will define the term *taxon* (*taxa*), and authorize its use for the terms *taxonomic group* or *groups*. The following draft proposal has been prepared for consideration and comment.

NOTE. The use of the word *taxon* (plural *taxa*) is appropriate for the term *taxonomic group* or the word *group* wherever used in the sense of *taxonomic group* in the International Bacteriological Code of Nomenclature. The word *group* has as its preferred use in bacteriology that indicated in Recommendation 8a (3).

Criticisms and comments will be welcomed. They will be taken into consideration before the final wording of the amendment.