NONCONFORMISM IN NOMENCLATURE

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Kauffmann (1959. Internat. Bull. 9:1) has made proposals that, if acted upon, would throw science into confusion. His main proposal is that the serotype of any organism in the Enterobacteriaceae should be regarded as a species, thus creating hundreds of new and unnamed species. It is obvious that Kauffmann has not thought out the consequences of so many unnamed species. Either new names would have to be found for over one hundred Escherichia coli serotypes, or the rules of nomenclature would be abandoned and the new "species" referred to by number. As the second course would be unacceptable to the Nomenclature Committee, a multitude of new epithets is the only possible consequence. Kauffmann extends his proposals to all serotypes, so even he must boggle at the idea of finding new epithets for all the serotypes of Arizona, Klebsiella, Hafnia, Proteus, Providencia, Citrobacter, and Cloaca.

The problem of species definition in bacteriology is almost insoluble and Kauffmann's proposal is extreme. It would be rather more logical to go to the other extreme of regarding each group of the Enterobacteriaceae (Salmonella, Arizona, Cloaca, etc.) as a species, and the further subdivisions as subspecies or serotypes. This would be much more in accordance with the thoughts of most workers, and would make it easier to explain the great overlapping of cultural and serological characters within the family. However, this other extreme would be equally unacceptable because it would mean too many changes of nomenclature.