The Species Issue in Virology

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The species issue in virology has been a contentious one for many years. To help clarify the situation, or at least bring it to the attention of a wider audience of virologists, the Executive Committee for the Taxonomy of Viruses held a symposium on the subject at the International Congress of Virology in Sendai in September 1984. The symposium was organized by F. Brown, B.M. Gorman, and D. W. Kingsbury in such a way that a wide range of views was presented. Four of the papers presented at the symposium are published here. The main reason for publishing them is to encourage more virologists to become interested in the species issue and, if possible, to take part in the debate.

For many years there has been a serious divergence in the views of virologists working with viruses infecting animals on the one hand and plants on the other. These views are expressed cogently in the four papers. *Kings-bury's* paper sets the scene for the debate, and those by *Harrison* and *Bishop* provide examples from plant and animal virology. The last article, by *Milne*, is very provocative and contains many debatable statements.

In my role as President of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, I have tried to remain above the battle, but it seems to me that the matter cannot be left unresolved. Provided that the symposium and the papers produced here help to clarify the issues and hopefully, as *Milne* writes, soften the dogmatism, then my successor may be able to resolve the species issue. There must be some way out of this dilemma.