

Correspondence

ANDREW S. WRIGHT

Science on its own can't dictate policy

A ban on the controversial trophy hunting of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*; pictured) in British Columbia, Canada, comes into force on 30 November. The province's new government considers the practice to be no longer sustainable — socially, economically or culturally. We are pleased to see an end to the co-opting of science to justify questionable policies.

Poll data have long shown strong opposition (more than 80%) to the trophy hunt, even in rural areas and among hunters. However, some scientists view the decision to ban the hunt as emotional or political, rather than science-based. Claims of numerical sustainability notwithstanding (see B. N. McLellan *et al.* *J. Wildl. Manag.* **81**, 218–229; 2017), this criticism implies that science can justify the exploitation of wildlife. We strongly disagree (see also K. A. Artelle *et al.* *PLoS ONE* **8**, e78041; 2013).

Science can predict outcomes of policy options, but how society ought to act is ultimately decided by values. The hunting ban aligns with most of society's moral compass: trophy hunting of inedible animals is no longer acceptable.

The ban stands to boost bear-based ecotourism, which brings in substantially more revenue than the trophy hunt (M. Honey *et al.* *J. Ecotour.* **15**, 199–240; 2016). It also conforms to long-standing Indigenous law against trophy hunting, recently formalized by a coalition of sovereign First Nations (see go.nature.com/2id1d0l).

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*On behalf of 4 correspondents (see go.nature.com/2i3qjty for a full list).



Trophy hunting of grizzly bears is now banned in British Columbia, Canada.

Thirty years of Dutch embryo selection

Charis Thompson and colleagues call for governments and international bodies to systematically collect society-wide data on embryo selection (*Nature* **551**, 33; 2017). In the Netherlands, government licences require all prenatal diagnostic centres to report annually the results of all their prenatal diagnostic tests and the grounds for pregnancy terminations. This practice was established about 30 years ago.

PGD Netherlands — a partnership between the only licenced Dutch pre-implantation genetic diagnosis centre, located in Maastricht, and IVF centres in Utrecht, Groningen and Amsterdam (see go.nature.com/2zx92hj) — must also report its results to the government on a yearly basis. These reports, which include all indications and decisions on selection, are discussed in the Dutch parliament. This shows that the practice of embryo selection can be kept under democratic control, albeit retrospectively.

The information can also be used for review of care and decision-making with respect to licence renewal. The prenatal diagnostic data are only accessible to medical professionals, but the PGD

reports are available to all stakeholders, including referring doctors and those living with disabilities.

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Lifetime word limits would unleash woe

If science's current predicament has taught us one thing, it is that we should beware of perverse incentives (see M. Edwards and S. Roy *Environ. Eng. Sci.* **34**, 51–61; 2017). So let us imagine the cascade of woe that could follow from Brian Martinson's thought experiment of allocating scientists a lifetime word limit (*Nature* **550**, 303; 2017).

Papers could become shorter and more obtuse, with content moved to appendices. 'Pre-prints' might never be published and instead would be squirreled away on personal websites — dodging peer review. A new type of predatory journal that falsified word limits could stoke demand and become pervasive.

Research collaborations would decline. Supervisors would leave their names off papers, relying on the force of association to boost their reputation. And, graduate students could have

their lifetime word limits exploited, particularly if they do not continue with an academic career (see *Nature* **550**, 429; 2017).

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Credit pioneer in plate tectonics

Your Editorial on the discovery of plate tectonics (*Nature* **550**, 7; 2017) makes no mention of J. Tuzo Wilson. This is particularly surprising because his publication 'A new class of faults and their bearing on continental drift' was the earliest to set out the plate hypothesis and it appeared in *Nature* itself (J. T. Wilson *Nature* **207**, 343–347; 1965).

In this paper, Wilson defined all three general types of plate boundary, and showed how they "formed a continuous network of mobile belts about the Earth which divide the surface into several large rigid plates". He pointed out that the motion predicted along transform faults could be used to test the hypothesis of plate motion, which was confirmed two years later (L. R. Sykes *J. Geophys. Res.* **72**, 2131–2153; 1967).

Wilson's 1965 paper was not 'precursory' to plate tectonics in the sense used in your Editorial: it is the seminal document of that discovery, 52 years ago.

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