

structure to the foundation. The Navy said it was the largest ever built and cost over \$1 million. Also completed were the shell for a 55,000-square-foot underground laboratory, access roads, a 25-mile gas pipeline, and an on-site plant for fabricating the reflector plates.)

While the Navy was tapering off construction, the economically depressed West Virginians were laying plans to make the big dish a tourist attraction, as well as the symbol for the state's centennial next year. To help them, the Area Redevelopment Administration bestowed upon the state its largest grant to date, \$1.4 million, to assist in the construction of tourist facilities. The grant came 3 weeks before the Department of Defense cancelled the project, and it has been suspended until a decision is made about the remains of the Sugar Grove radiotelescope. The Defense Department says it is looking into whether other government agencies would like to carry on the project, but as might be expected, no takers have appeared. The Navy, not too long ago, was eager to publicize its giant telescope and even conducted press tours at the site. All inquiries are now referred to information officers who have very little to say.—D. S. GREENBERG

### **Tobacco and Health: PHS Sets Up Rules for Study Committee**

The Public Health Service last week announced some rather unusual ground rules for the selection of the committee that will conduct its inquiry into the health effects of tobacco. The rules were worked out by the PHS at a meeting with representatives of federal agencies, nongovernmental professional groups, health organizations, and the tobacco industry.

The object of the inquiry is to make a scientific determination, a goal that would seem to make professional competence the overriding consideration for membership on the inquiry committee. However, the subject of health and tobacco is so deeply involved with economic and political considerations that it was decided that candidates must not only be scientifically qualified, but must also have remained outside of the public debate on tobacco and health. According to a PHS announcement, "Scientists who have already taken a strong public position pro or con will not be considered." A Public Health

spokesman acknowledged that this was an unusual criterion, "but under the circumstances we feel it is the best thing to do."

He said no decision has been made on whether views expressed in professional journals constitute a "public position," but felt confident that in any event, there is a sufficient number of publicly uninvolved, qualified scientists to carry out the committee's work. This will consist of reviewing existing studies to determine "the nature and magnitude of the health hazard." The PHS also said, "the study will be concerned not only with tobacco but also with all other factors, which may be involved, such as air pollution, automobile exhausts, and so forth."

The committee will consist of approximately 12 scientists selected from a list of 150 with recognized standing in fields including biochemistry, cancer biology, pharmacology, public health and preventive medicine, social and behavioral sciences, statistics, and surgery.

Surgeon General Luther L. Terry said he will make the final selection, but membership on the committee may be denied "for whatever reason" by representatives of organizations that consulted with the PHS on the formation of the committee and the selection of the 150-member list. These organizations are: The American Cancer Society, the American College of Chest Surgeons, the American Heart Association, the American Medical Association, the Tobacco Institute, Inc. (an industry-sponsored agency for research into tobacco and health), the Food and Drug Administration, the National Tuberculosis Association, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Office of Science and Technology.

None of the committee members will represent any organization or group, Terry said, nor will selections be made of scientists participating in similar studies about to be undertaken by the Council on Drugs of the American Medical Association and the American Thoracic Society.

The committee is expected to begin work in mid-September and to report back to the surgeon general in about 6 months. Terry said a second phase of the study, titled "recommendations for action," will be undertaken after delivery of the report. He added that "No decision on how the second phase is to be conducted will be taken until phase one is completed. It is recog-

nized," he continued, "that different competencies may be needed in this phase and that many possible recommendations for action extend beyond the health field and into the purview and competence of other agencies."

The effort to create a committee that is beyond reproach reflects the Kennedy administration's concern over the political power of the tobacco states. The White House, which worked closely with the PHS in the development of the tobacco study, is acutely aware that tobacco constitutes a large piece of the economic foundation of six southern states heavily represented in influential positions in Congress: North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. Tobacco crops alone brought these states more than \$1.1 billion last year, and their congressional delegations have consistently battered attempts to bring the federal government into the controversy over tobacco and health.

The genesis of the forthcoming PHS study was in the growing accumulation of presumptive evidence that points to cigarette smoking as a factor in lung cancer and other ailments. These findings led Terry's predecessor, Surgeon General Leroy E. Burney, to conclude in 1959 that "the weight of evidence at present implicates smoking as the principal etiological factor in the increased incidence of lung cancer." Similar conclusions have led a number of European nations, notably Great Britain, to undertake campaigns to persuade the public against excessive smoking.

In this country, the Federal Trade Commission, which has jurisdiction over cigarette advertising, has been pressuring the Public Health Service to provide it with the sort of clean-cut scientific statement against tobacco that would support an FTC position for further curbs on tobacco advertising. At present, the FTC prohibits health claims in cigarette advertising, but elements within the agency would like to go one step further and require tobacco advertising and packages to carry a warning against excessive use.

The Administration in its current troubles with the business community is not inclined to take on the tobacco industry, but under the pressure of scientific findings and positive action across the Atlantic, it sees no alternative to taking some action to determine the public health hazard; hence, the creation of the PHS's carefully selected committee.—D.S.G.