

## NEWS IN BRIEF

● **NATIONAL EYE INSTITUTE:** The House Commerce Committee has passed a bill that would establish a National Eye Institute to study blindness and eye disorders and to sponsor training for eye specialists. The bill, sponsored by Representative Harley O. Staggers, (D.-W. Va.) would establish the National Eye Institute as a part of the National Institutes of Health, but would separate it from NIH's present National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness (NINDB). The House Committee said that NINDB now devotes only 15 to 20 percent of its total program to vision defects, that a separate eye institute would help expand research in the field. A similar bill has been sponsored in the Senate by Lister Hill (D-Ala.), but no action has been taken. Major critics of the proposal are Health, Education, and Welfare Department officials who say that a National Eye Institute separated from NINDB is not necessary, that substantial eye research is now being conducted in NINDB, and that eye research is too narrow a field to justify a possible fragmentation of present research facilities. The House is expected to act on the bill before Congress adjourns next month.

● **ECOLOGY STUDIES:** The Ford Foundation has announced research grants totaling nearly \$4 million to eight universities to promote academic development in ecological studies. The recipients are Stanford University, University of California at Davis, Colorado State University, University of Washington, Johns Hopkins University, Missouri Botanical Garden, Yale University, and University of British Columbia. A recently published report, *Ford Foundation Grants in Resources and Environment*, is available from the Ford Foundation, Office of Reports, 320 East 43 Street, New York 10017.

● **ROMANIAN EXCHANGE:** Donald F. Hornig, the President's science adviser, has announced a broader scientific exchange program between the United States and Romania. The new agreement provides that each government designate a science officer to its respective embassy in Bucharest and Washington. It also provides for a wider exchange of knowledge in commercial enterprises, an increased exchange program for scientists and scholars and

greater cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy. The agreement is the result of meetings between Hornig and Alexander Birladeanu, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, who has just completed a 3-week U.S. visit.

● **SOVIET-U.S. FISH EXCHANGE:** Despite recent disagreements over United States and Soviet fishing-vessel rights, the two nations have recently completed a fourth official cooperative fish exchange program to advance knowledge of marine life and to find ways to increase the world's food supply by studying breeding habits of fish. The exchange program began as a joint effort of the Interior Department and the Soviet All-Union Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography. North Carolina striped bass have been flown from federal hatcheries to Russia, and, in exchange, American scientists have received the Russian Amur River pike, which scientists at Pennsylvania State University are studying.

● **CONSERVATION FUND:** The critical shortage of money available for the purchase of land for new national parks and other federal and state recreation areas will be eased by new amendments to the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. Under the amendments, on which Congress completed action last week, part of the lease receipts from federal oil and gas lands on the outer continental shelf will be earmarked for the Fund during the next 5 years if necessary to bring its total revenues up to \$200 million a year. The Fund's existing sources of revenue have been producing less than half that amount. Although the earmarking of continental shelf revenues for the Fund had been strongly opposed by some senators (*Science*, 28 June), final Senate passage of the Fund Act amendments came routinely, on a voice vote. The new legislation also includes provisions intended to combat rapid escalation of land prices; one gives government limited authority to take options when funds to buy land are lacking.

● **NEW PUBLICATIONS:** *Draft Facts for Graduates and Graduate Students*, a report by the Scientific Manpower Commission. Copies may be obtained for 50¢ from the Scientific Manpower Commission, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20418.

each grantee after it is determined how much will have to be cut from NIH's total expenditures. The Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Defense and all other agencies are preparing to make their contributions to the \$6 billion reduction, but at this writing, details were not available on the methods that will be employed.

Hornig and his staff, in close contact with the Bureau of the Budget and the various agencies that support research and education, say that in planning for reductions that will affect scientific activities, a high priority has been given to protecting graduate training. "We want to avoid catastrophes," Hornig said, "and we've concluded that one of the worst catastrophes would be an impairment of our future supply of scientists." Hornig's assessment is that federal support of science "is now on a plateau, but over the long pull, it's going to turn upward." In an interview with *Science*, Hornig did not sound happy about what may lie ahead in the federal agencies, but he also seemed equally unhappy about the way some scientists have been behaving in regard to the budgetary situation. "It is fair to say," he remarked, "that some of the reaction has been hysterical. In figuring out how to respond to the need to reduce spending, we need useful facts to help us decide where reductions can be made with the least damage. What we're getting from some quarters is simply hysteria."

Hornig would not say whether he was referring to the so-called "emergency meeting" that the New York Academy of Sciences called last month to assail cutbacks in federal support of research. But a member of his staff addressed that doleful meeting and spoke sharply against the crepehangers who maintained that American science is being seriously damaged by short-sighted economizing. For what it's worth, Hornig points out that even if the worst happens, which he does not think will be the case, the United States "will still have the highest per capita expenditure on research and development in the world," and the figure is even higher, he says, in the area of basic research. This is less than minuscule consolation for the researcher who is budgeted out of a project, but, contrary to the arrogant assumptions that prevail in some scientific circles, the scientific community does not merit automatic entrée to the nation's tax revenues, and those scientists who, in effect, contend that it does, are simply