

NEWS IN BRIEF

● CONGRESS PASSES COAL MINE

SAFETY BILL: The strongest coal mine health and safety bill ever passed by Congress has been sent to the White House, but there have been hints that the President—who originally supported the bill—might veto it. The bill includes a federally operated compensation program for miners disabled by the “black lung” disease; the administration opposes the provision as too inflationary. The administration estimates the bill would cost \$385 million a year, but congressional sponsors say it would cost not more than \$60 million the first year and less afterward. The administration also opposes the bill because it places the compensation program in federal hands, unlike other workman’s compensation programs. The bill also sets permissible limits on coal dust in mines, and imposes other safety standards.

● PERILS OF CARBON MONOX-

IDE: Carbon monoxide contamination of air is a growing menace to the nation’s health and should be given special study, according to a report issued by the National Academy of Sciences. The report, “Effects of Chronic Exposures to Low Levels of Carbon Monoxide on Human Health, Behavior, and Performance,” is an extensive collection and evaluation of research on carbon monoxide. The report examines, for example, the impairment of mental functions which carbon monoxide seems to cause at certain levels after certain periods of exposure. The report can be obtained free from the Division of Medical Sciences, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

● WILSON INTERNATIONAL CEN-

TER: The new Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington is now seeking applications and nominations, due 15 January, for fellows to be in residence next fall. Fellows will be chosen from both academic and professional fields for varying periods of study. For the opening period of the Center, the trustees have designated two subjects as areas in which applications are “specially invited and encouraged”: the development of international law for the oceans; and late 20th-century man in perspective. Information and applications can be obtained from: Woodrow

Wilson International Center for Scholars, Smithsonian Institution Building, 1000 Jefferson Drive, NW, Washington, D.C.

● AIR FORCE ENDS SAUCER

HUNT: The Air Force has ended its investigation of unidentified flying objects after 22 years and 12,618 investigations. Project Blue Book, the program’s code name, could not be continued “either on the ground of national security or in the interest of science,” said Air Force Secretary Robert C. Seamans, Jr. An Air Force-financed report done earlier this year by the University of Colorado, which was later endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences, recommended that no further official studies of UFO’s be made, but scientists who are interested should receive funds.

● **RADCLIFFE VACATIONS:** Prospective Radcliffe freshmen this April will receive, along with a letter of acceptance, an invitation to take a year off without losing their places at college. Dean David K. Smith of the Admissions Office said this option has always been open to freshmen, but not publicized; the intent behind wider publicity is to indicate clearly to parents that Radcliffe approves of the option. “A lot of kids have been on a treadmill, and this will give them time to think,” Smith said. Places left vacant will be filled from those on the waiting list.

● GRANTS TO CHURCH COL-

LEGES CHALLENGED: Fifteen Connecticut taxpayers have filed suit against federal and state education officials contending that federal grants to church-related colleges are unconstitutional. The citizens charge that the grants, given under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, violate the First Amendment prohibition against laws “respecting an establishment of religion.” Government officials say \$1.4 billion has been granted to colleges from 1964 to 1968 under this act; about 10 percent of the total has gone to church-related schools. The grants have partially financed libraries, laboratories, a science building, and a humanities building. The case, known as *Tilton v. Finch*, is being heard by a three-judge panel; it is expected to go eventually to the Supreme Court.

L. Jaffe, a Harvard law professor, said that 29 states allow any citizen to file suit to contest official conduct which is alleged to be illegal and that, in at least 27 states, any taxpayer has this privilege. “I would conclude that the constitutional obstacles to [such citizens’] suits . . . are becoming less and less significant,” Jaffe added.

Scenic Hudson is a case, which, although the dispute that gave rise to it is still unresolved, has established two important precedents—federal regulatory bodies have been told to give greater weight to esthetic values and to allow conservation organizations to intervene in cases that raise environmental issues. In 1965, the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals set aside an order of the Federal Power Commission (FPC) granting the Consolidated Edison Company a license to build a pumped-storage hydro-power facility at Storm King Mountain on the Hudson River. The court directed the commission to reopen the matter and to consider the preservation of natural beauty as well as such factors as the economics of power generation. The decision was appealed, but the Supreme Court declined to review the ruling.

In later FPC proceedings, the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference, the Sierra Club, and other conservation organizations sought to show that Storm King Mountain is not merely pretty but uniquely beautiful. Specialists in cartography, landscape architecture, and art history were called to testify. They pointed out, for example, that although a number of rivers cut through the Appalachian Mountains, only the Hudson cuts through at sea level and achieves the effect of a fjord. Thus, these experts argued, even though the appreciation of natural beauty is subjective, certain objective esthetic standards can be applied. An FPC hearing examiner has since recommended that the Storm King project be approved, and the Commission may yet grant the license. But the precedents established in *Scenic Hudson* already have proved useful to conservationists in other suits.

For example, the Sierra Club, citing *Scenic Hudson* and certain other precedents, gained standing to bring suit against federal agencies to block construction of an expressway along the Hudson River, a segment of which was to be built on filled land in the river itself. The Sierra Club’s attorneys dredged up an old statute pertaining to navigable waters which says that no dike or causeway may be built in the