cluded that safety had been "adequately established" for nonnutritive sweeteners, including cyclamates.

The students' report charged that the FDA's "selective acceptance of expertise deprived the creation of the GRAS list of any respectability as a scientific endeavor. . . . The vigor with which the FDA announced that it had consulted 900 scientists about the list suggests that the consultation was done for public relations and not scientific reasons."

Some of the incidents cited by the students illustrate what they consider "almost incredible . . . bungling" by the FDA. Perhaps the prime example of this is the FDA's campaign against vitamin supplements. In 1962 the FDA decided that vitamin supplements and health foods cost the American people an unnecessary $300 million each year, so it issued regulations to suppress the "fraud." The most significant part of the regulations was a requirement that each bottle of vitamins be labeled to inform the public that they get all the vitamins they need from the food they eat. The FDA claimed to have the support of the National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council, but it had changed the amounts of various vitamins recommended by an NAS–NRC committee headed by William Sebrell. Sebrell consequently denounced the FDA regulations. In recalling the incident, James Goddard, former FDA commissioner, said: "It shook me up that we didn't have enough know-how to prevent the mistakes that became apparent in the dietary supplement regulations." Goddard tried to track down the man who had changed the NAS–NRC recommended amounts only to find that he had left the agency immediately after filing his report. By that time, the students note, "the agency was so far down the path of pushing the regulations that it could not withdraw."

The FDA is not a happy place for scientists to work, if the student investigators are to be believed. Several researchers showed the students "atrocity logs" in which they kept detailed accounts of "assaults on their scientific integrity." They complained that some supervisors routinely sign their names to research work they have not conducted; that one supervisor dispenses invitations to scientific meetings only to "yes men" and "stooges"; and that another supervisor has expressed the belief that mediocre researchers should be promoted because they need more help than good researchers do. The most common complaint was that the FDA "constantly interferes" with medium- and long-range research projects, at least partly from fear that the results will embarrass the agency.

The students also criticized the FDA for retaliating against scientists who disagree with its positions. They noted that Jacqueline Verrett, an FDA biochemist who reported a relationship between cyclamate injected into chicken eggs and deformities of embryos taken from the eggs, was consistently ignored by the FDA and was then criticized by Secretary Finch for expressing her doubts about cyclamates on a Washington, D.C., television station.

Critic Fired

Similarly, William C. Purdy, who served as science adviser to the FDA's Baltimore district, was let go after he submitted a detailed critique of one of the FDA's pesticides control programs. Purdy's contract was not renewed when it expired last July and, according to the students, the FDA shortly thereafter removed all the raw data laboratory sheets from the Baltimore office, thus removing "some of the major evidence supporting charges against the program from the reach of persons who might be critical of it."

The National Academy of Sciences also comes in for criticism, though the attack on the Academy is not nearly so bitter in tone as the attack on FDA. The students charge that the NAS Committee on Non-Nutritive Sweeteners ignored data, which an alarmed FDA scientist submitted to it, suggesting that cyclamates might cause genetic damage, apparently because the committee has a stated policy of evaluating "only material that is in the published literature or has come to it through official channels." The students also claim that FDA officials who sit on the Academy's pesticide committee are "crucial to its operation" and that the FDA thus ends up sitting in judgment on itself when the Academy reviews pesticides.

The students make a number of recommendations aimed at turning the FDA from a "mediocre plodding agency" into a "vital force for the public good." Perhaps the most significant recommendation is that the laws be changed so as to make FDA enforcement actions compulsory rather than dependent on "the discretionary authority of the politically appointed Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare." The students also suggest

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **INTERIOR UNDER SECRETARY:** Fred J. Russell, a multimillionaire California businessman, has been appointed to the Interior Department's second highest post. Russell was formerly Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, a post he assumed shortly after the 1968 election. The 53-year-old Russell has both industrial and real estate holdings, with experience in developing residential and industrial property. He takes over as Under Secretary from Russell E. Train, now head of the Council on Environmental Quality. Train had been, prior to his appointment in the Interior Department, president of the Conservation Foundation, a leader in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and a founder of the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation.

● **OIL SPILL BILL:** President Nixon has signed a bill imposing stiff penalties on owners of leaking oil wells or tankers which pollute U.S. territorial waters. Under the new law, an owner could be billed for cleanup costs of up to $14 million for each incident, unless he could prove the spill was caused by an act of God, war, or a third party. There would be no ceiling on an owner's liability if he were found guilty of willful negligence or misconduct. Authority is also provided for immediate federal action to clean up spills, criminal penalties for failure to give notice of such occurrences, and research to develop new cleanup methods.

● **PILL WARNING MODIFIED:** The Food and Drug Administration, apparently responding to pressures from doctors, pill manufacturers, and planned parenthood advocates, has revised its proposed warning for birth control pills. The new 115-word warning (about 1/6 the original length) does not mention any side effects except blood-clotting; it advises women to consult a doctor if they experience any of several symptoms. All technical language and statistics have been removed from the new warning, which was published in the *Federal Register* last week. A more detailed statement, similar to the one first proposed by the FDA, will be sent to all doctors. Interested parties now have 30 days to comment.