

Fredrickson Says Yes . . .

After thinking it over for two and a half months, Donald Sharp Fredrickson has decided to say yes, he will accept the presidency of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

With reference to the array of issues relating to health care in the United States, Fredrickson says, "There has to be a place for analysis not suspect of special interests. I believe the Institute of Medicine's mission is to do this and I think it can do it well." He emphasizes that his move to the institute from the National Heart and Lung Institute is a positive one and that he is not leaving the National Institutes of Health as a protest of any sort.—B.J.C.

. . . Hosmer Says No

Representative Craig R. Hosmer (R-Calif.), one of the staunchest congressional champions of nuclear energy over the past two decades, has decided not to seek election to a 12th term in the House. In a brief announcement on 22 January, Hosmer gave no specific reasons for retiring, but he indicated that his decision stemmed in part from a recent ruling of the California Supreme Court redrawing the boundaries of his conservative Long Beach-Orange County district. The realignment returns to Hosmer some mostly Democratic territory excised from his district in 1968.

A 22-year veteran of Congress, Hosmer is an attorney (employed in the late 1940's by the Atomic Energy Commission) and a rear admiral in the Naval reserve. He is the senior Republican House member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and ranking Republican on the House Interior Committee. Over the years, the latter job was almost incidental to his first love: the advancement of nuclear energy and most particularly of the liquid-metal fast breeder reactor. Respected by fellow members as an expert on all things nuclear, Hosmer has exhibited little patience with critics of the AEC and the nuclear industry.

Hosmer, who is 58, says he has no intention of retiring from work altogether. He is the 12th House Republican to bow out of next November's election.—R.G.

ORV's in the desert, the museum staff said the effect of ORV's on soils and plant and animal life was such that these machines represented a "Frankenstein monster." The scientists said that even the purity of the desert air was threatened, this from the billowing clouds of dust stirred up by ORV's. Believing that the proposed management plan was far too liberal, they contended that "a major educational and policing program should be launched as soon as possible to prevent further increases in [ORV] use on public lands and to begin to roll back present levels of use."

"We feel that an accommodating stance will only compound the problems we now face and, in fact, represent a virtual victory for the destructive forces of the ORV's," the scientists added. They recommended that off-

road use of vehicles be confined to those areas already damaged beyond recovery, with no predominantly wild area open to ORV's unless justified on the basis of a carefully prepared environmental impact statement.

Generally, the museum staff held, ORV's should not be allowed on trails, but only on paved or maintained dirt roads, because policing the trails is at present manifestly impossible. Some 90 enforcement people are needed in the desert, BLM people say, against the seven actually available (this number will soon be increased, but not by nearly enough). Furthermore, the BLM, still without an organic act spelling out its mission and powers after all these years (the BLM, as such, was established in 1946), lacks the legal authority for direct enforcement of its land use plans.

The desert management plan was criticized as far too liberal by not only the museum staff, but also by the Sierra Club and certain other groups such as the Desert Protective Council. Nevertheless, the interim plan finally promulgated in November was not very different from what had first been proposed. Its basic elements are these:

- Sixteen areas have been closed to recreational ORV use altogether, their total acreage representing about 4 percent of the 12 million acres of desert land under BLM jurisdiction.

- Thirteen areas are open to virtually unrestricted use, and these, together with the roadside strips open to ORV's, take in about 12 percent of all BLM desert land. In general, the "open" areas have already seen ORV use, but some include many thousands of acres still relatively undisturbed.

- The remainder of the BLM land is open to limited use, with ORV's allowed on *all* existing roads and trails in some areas and on *designated* roads and trails in others.

- In addition to the open and restricted use areas, several routes were designated for cross-country racing.

This plan was developed in keeping with a presidential Executive order of February 1972 pertaining to the use of ORV's on the public lands and with general regulations since proposed by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton. The essence of the government's policy is that recreational use of ORV's on public lands is legitimate, provided that conflict with other activities and with the preservation of resources is "minimized."

In the Department of the Interior's impact statement on the Secretary's proposed regulations, one finds the following observation: "In essence, growth of public interest in ORV use has outstripped easy control of controversial impacts. The current thrust will be to alleviate this controversy by providing space for users and space for nonusers and protection of the natural legacies several Interior bureaus are charged with."

In effect, what this suggests is that it is too late to deal with the ORV question in a truly rational way and that the best that can be done is to work out a compromise. But what might a rational solution be?

The BLM view is that, if its management plan were redrawn to confine ORV's largely to established roads and certain designated trails, many ORV people would simply ignore it. Further,