
New EEO Leadership at NASA

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which came under heavy fire last winter over the inadequacy of its equal employment opportunity (EEO) program, has appointed a new director to its EEO office, and has rehired the woman who started all the fuss.

Ruth Bates Harris, who was fired from the office last October after she and two colleagues issued a report lambasting NASA (*Science*, 23 November 1973), has been reinstated, this time as deputy assistant administrator for public affairs in community and human affairs. Dudley McConnell, who took over administration of the EEO office from Harris 16 months ago, has moved over to the post of assistant associate administrator for space applications. Now heading the EEO office is Harriett Jenkins, a black educator who has worked in the Berkeley, California, and District of Columbia school systems.

NASA got some public roasting in congressional hearings early this year over its glacial progress in improving job opportunities for minorities and women. Since then, considerably more manpower and money has been invested in the effort, and the Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences is keeping the pressure on by requiring quarterly progress reports.

The reemployment of Harris and the reassignment of McConnell seem to signal at least partial vindication for Harris and her allies. But in-house conflicts remain, many of which will probably come to light in the fall, when the NAACP legal defense fund plans to bring suit on behalf of a number of employees in NASA's field centers who have made charges of discrimination against the space agency.—C.H.

2000 Scientists Petition for Soviet Colleagues

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) has often maintained that the détente with the Soviet Union would necessarily be accompanied by more

criticism of Soviet internal policies by American scientists. The FAS is now making this a self-fulfilling prophecy by issuing a strongly worded appeal to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin, urging that the Soviets simply let out of the country any scientist whom they do not permit to do scientific work inside Russia.

The appeal is in the form of a petition signed by 2000 U.S. scientists asserting the "right" of Soviet and Eastern European scientists to function as scientists inside their countries and to communicate and travel freely for scholarly purposes, and to debate their views inside their countries and abroad. The petition is part of a letter to Dobrynin signed by FAS chairman Philip Morrison, professor of physics at MIT.

The FAS appeal may not cut much ice in Moscow, but as with appeals from other groups, it may have more effect in Washington. After meeting with several senators who have been active in the battle for more Soviet Jewish emigration, President Ford was reported recently to have pledged that he would personally hold the Soviet Union to account for more humane emigration policies.—D.S.

Hearing Ordered for Sacked Scientists

A Maryland federal court of appeals has ruled that four scientists, summarily fired from the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center last month, be reinstated pending the outcome of a court-ordered hearing. Since the case was argued on the ground that the four had been denied their constitutional right of due process, this decision could affect state employees throughout the country. Not only were the scientists judged to have a right to a hearing (they are in positions not covered by the usual posttermination civil service grievance procedures), but the judge said they had a right to have one prior to being fired. The Federation of American Scientists, which helped the group find legal counsel, says it is gratified by the decision which it believes will provide significant job protection for "whistleblowers"—people who call the public's attention to questionable practices by their employers.—C.H.

A Media Event For Science

On 14 August, 170 radio stations around the country carried, live from Washington, a debate of sorts among Edward Teller, the well-known fusion power proponent, Philip Morrison, the dovish Massachusetts Institute of Technology physicist and cosmologist, some science writers, and several hundred tourists as part of a program known as "National Town Meeting." The 90-minute debate centered on the question of the worldwide proliferation of nuclear power, but other subjects were covered too, such as whether certain employees at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory where Teller works were about to be fired and whether Milton Shaw, the Atomic Energy Commission's one-time director of reactor development, had hampered the nation's progress toward having nuclear energy by giving safety considerations short shrift.

The courtly, articulate Morrison argued for political controls to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons which could accompany the proliferation of nuclear power plants around the world. Teller, however, turned the emphasis around and deemed that proliferation of nuclear weapons among many other nations of the world is inevitable. "Proliferation is a spread of knowledge, a spread of know-how, and no treaty will stop it." He argued that nuclear power plants are desperately needed to prevent world disorder. "If worldwide discontent and conflicts are to be avoided, there must be more energy. That is the historic mission of uranium."

Teller claimed he was like Ralph Nader because of his early interest in reactor safeguards, in the 1950's—a comparison which met with laughter from the audience. Present-day reactors would be safer, Teller said, if they were put underground so that radioactivity could not leak out in the event of an accident—a possibility, however, which his own laboratory has spent only 3 man-months studying.

"National Town Meeting," broadcast live by National Public Radio each Wednesday, is intended to be a new national forum for public debate. The project was conceived by Fred Dutton, a Kennedy family associate and Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations in the early 1960's.

—D.S.