

even their normal demands for fertilizer, and failure to do so "could push agricultural output back towards traditionally low levels of productivity." India is thought to have lost a million tons of her spring crop—about 1 per-

cent—for lack of fuel to pump irrigation water, and fuel and fertilizer shortages may have reduced the summer crop by 10 million tons.

Even without fertilizer the HYV's still do better than most traditional

varieties, but they lose much of their advantage. Indian scientists have been considering a return to emphasis on certain traditional varieties which, under minimum amounts of fertilizer, give better yields than do HYV's.

## Briefing

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### Arms Control Groups Qualify Approval

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The arms control community appears to be taking the Vladivostok nuclear weapons agreement with, so to speak, a grain of SALT. Three major, Washington-based, private organizations concerned with arms control matters—the Arms Control Association (ACA), the Council for a Livable World (CLW), and the Federation of American Scientists (FAS)—attach similar strong reservations while giving conditional approval to the accord.

The groups question whether the agreement constitutes the "break-through" in arms negotiations claimed by Administration officials and share the view expressed in a statement from the ACA that "Ultimately, . . . the value of the Vladivostok accords will depend on what the final agreement itself says, and on its implementation."

President Ford and Soviet Communist Party general secretary Brezhnev on 24 November signed the accord, which amounts to a statement of principles to guide the second round of SALT (strategic arms limitation talks) negotiations next year. Each side for the first time is to be limited to a fixed number (about 2400) of strategic delivery vehicles, including bombers and land- and sea-based missiles. Limits are set on the number of missiles (1320) to be armed with MIRV's (multiple independently targetable warheads), but not, it should be noted, on the number of warheads. The treaty, when signed, is to run to 1985, and is to carry a provision for negotiations by 1980–1981 on further limitations and possible reductions of strategic arms.

The FAS executive committee on 12 November released an analysis and statement which reflected the extent of reservations among its board members and expert advisers by carrying majority and minority views, which is unprecedented for FAS in recent years.

The majority position gave provisional backing to the agreement with the two following qualifications:

"1. The Administration should assert that any build-ups of weapons under the Treaty would be put before the Congress on their merits and not as part of a package deal required by the Treaty.

"2. The Administration should assert that the clause announcing that negotiations will reopen no later than 1981 does not mask any quiet agreement with the Russians not to open negotiations earlier."

In a dissenting view, George M. Rathjens of MIT argued that the Vladivostok agreement is an unacceptable basis for further negotiations on strategic arms because it is likely to actually spur "acquisition of superfluous strategic arms" and is "likely to be a stimulus to nuclear proliferation."

The Council for a Livable World infrequently issues formal statements on issues such as the Vladivostok accord, but staff members said that sentiment among council leaders is generally similar to that expressed by its arms control peer groups.—J.W.

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### Ethics Commission Holds Its First Meeting

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The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, for which there is no pronounceable acronym, met for the first time recently and tried to figure out how to go about its business of recommending guidelines that will affect the course of scientific experimentation for years to come. The commission's most pressing duty, set by law (*Science*, 2 August), is to reach some judgment about the present national moratorium on research on living human fetuses that are the subject of planned abortions. It has until 30 April 1975 to send its recommendations to

Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary Caspar Weinberger who must either accept them or tell the public, in writing, why he cannot.

The 11 members of the commission, chosen by an intensely political process from a field of a couple of hundred persons, represent the fields of science, law, and ethics. Following a swearing-in ceremony in which the commissioners promised to uphold the Constitution and defend the country against its enemies, domestic and foreign, Charles U. Lowe, executive director of the staff, told them some of the rules of the game for federal advisory committees. Their meetings and their papers, he said in a room full of at least 50 observers, would be open to the public. The commissioners then launched into a discussion about whether any of them should be allowed to talk to the press outside of the open meetings. Some of the scientists were leary—best not get involved with reporters, they said. The lawyers tended to think any kind of gag rule was silly. In the end, they agreed that each commissioner should act prudently. It seemed the only sensible thing to do.

A considerable portion of the 1½-day meeting was taken up with procedural matters—under whose authority would contracts for studies be let, who has the power to call and adjourn meetings, that sort of thing. But the group did approve one plan to get the work on the fetal research issue started. Jeremiah Mahoney, a pediatrician and geneticist at Yale University, will do a study that will include at least the following things:

1) A search of the literature for all work on living fetuses, with a notation of the purpose for which the work was done.

2) Summaries of the results of that research.

3) Consideration of whether those results could have been obtained by research that did not involve a live fetus—animal experimentation, for example.

For the small farmer, urged by aid givers and extension workers to abandon his tried, traditional methods for an HYV crop, failure to get the fertilizer he requires may not increase his confidence in the wisdom of experts.

Traditional peasant agriculture, like other aspects of primitive societies, is in fact considerably more subtle than it seems at first glance to a Western expert. The yields of a peasant's crop are very low. But so is the risk: his

field, in which he usually grows many varieties and several different crops, nearly always produces something, however bad the pests or weather. The peasant farmer's first goal is not to maximize his profits: it is to minimize

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## Briefing

4) Consideration of the impact of fetal research on fetal medicine and societal needs.

The commission intends to contract out for similar studies of available information in law and ethics as they relate to fetal research.

At the end of business, the commissioners elected Harvard obstetrician Kenneth Ryan as their chairman and set 10 January for their next meeting.—B.J.C.

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### Edwards Leaving HEW

Charles C. Edwards has resigned as assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to join a medical supply firm in Rutherford, New Jersey. He will be senior vice president of Becton, Dickinson and Company.

Edwards, who will leave in January, has been thinking about getting out of government for some time.—B.J.C.

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### Seamans, Zarb, Anders & Company

The Senate has set the stage for the formal dissolution of the Atomic Energy Commission and its reconstitution as the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA). On 12 December the Senate confirmed the nominations of Robert C. Seamans, Jr. as the administrator of ERDA and William A. Anders as chairman of the new and autonomous Nuclear Regulatory Commission, to be formed from the regulatory arm of the AEC.

The next day the Senate approved Dixy Lee Ray as Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. Her departure as AEC chairman and the establishment of ERDA are not expected until early in the new year,

however, possibly during February.

In the meantime, the Senate has also confirmed Frank G. Zarb as a replacement for the outgoing chief of the Federal Energy Administration, John C. Sawhill. Zarb, a respected associate director of the Office of Management and Budget and a man of no identifiable ideology, is said to have extracted from President Ford a promise of direct access to the Oval Office, something each of his several predecessors (including Sawhill) initially thought they had, and in the end did not.

The parade of new faces in energy policy continues with four nominations from the White House for seats on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They are Richard T. Kennedy, now a National Security Council staffer; Victor Gilinsky, head of RAND Corporation's physical science department in Santa Monica; Edward A. Mason, chairman of the nuclear engineering department at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Marcus A. Rowden, until last month the AEC's general counsel.

Finally, the year's end will bring the departure of Alvin M. Weinberg as head of R & D policy for the FEA, a job he has held since retiring as director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory a year ago. Weinberg plans to return to Tennessee for a period of writing and relaxation.—R.G.

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### Harvard Faculty Says XXY Study Should Continue

The faculty of the Harvard Medical School has decided to allow two of its members to continue screening newborn males for chromosomal abnormalities—particularly XYY and XXY—in spite of the vocal opposition of a few faculty members. It is the culmination of a series of events that have taken place since May when Jonathan Beckwith, of the department of microbiology and molecular genetics, and six colleagues lodged a formal demand that the study

be banned. The ensuing debate on the issue has been emotional, often bitter (*Science*, 22 November).

For several years, Stanley Walzer, a psychiatrist, and Park Gerald, a human geneticist, have been screening all baby boys born in the Harvard-affiliated Boston Hospital for Women. They had two purposes in mind: to gather data about the frequency of XYY and XXY chromosome patterns in the population and to follow up any XYY or XXY children to see whether there is any association between the chromosomal abnormalities and antisocial behavior. Walzer and Gerald believe that XYY boys may be predisposed to ill-defined behavioral problems, but they say that the notion that XYY is a "criminal chromosome" is nonsense.

Beckwith and his colleagues took issue with the study, claiming that, by telling parents their boy is an XYY and possibly prone to behavioral trouble, the doctors create a situation of a "self-fulfilling prophecy."

On 20 November, Harvard's standing committee on medical research, having heard testimony on both sides, concluded that the study should continue. On 13 December, committee chairman Dana Farnsworth presented the group's opinion to the full faculty, which accepted it. He declared that "research on the genetic basis of behavior is important and worthy of pursuit," that the investigators had behaved ethically and sensitively, and that there was no evidence that the study had harmed any of its participants. Farnsworth, speaking for the committee, then cast understated aspersions on Beckwith and his colleagues for the manner in which they conducted their opposition. Beckwith's tactic of going to the press, he said, "was not looked upon with enthusiasm," and Farnsworth went on to suggest that the attacks on the Walzer study might be construed as an infringement on academic freedom.

Beckwith says the report is a "white-wash" and that he intends to keep on trying to block the chromosome study.—B.J.C.