

Dr. Morrison's review." What followed was a short paragraph characterized by the fairly heavy use of ellipses, rather in the way that book or movie reviews are often excerpted to construct blurbs. The paragraph concluded, "The personnel and ad-

visors are excellent. . . . The idea is good. . . ."

Conlan observed that the quote conveyed unqualified support, not only by Morrison, but by all 11 reviewers of the project. Conlan said his staff had

checked with Morrison, and "he informed us that he definitely *did not* give his unqualified support when he reviewed the proposed project more than two years earlier. On reflection he also said that he had been very critical of the careless scope, content and purpose of the 80 to 125 'mini-courses' to be developed."

When asked by *Science* whether the Conlan statement accurately reflected Morrison's comments on the ISIS review, Morrison said that the account was "itself a misrepresentation." Morrison said that he had written a letter to Conlan discussing the matter and found it hard to understand why Conlan had not produced the letter at the hearings.

More light on the subject is likely to be shed on 1 August when Morrison—who has been invited to testify and has accepted the invitation—is scheduled to appear.

At the hearings, NSF officials acknowledged that the reviewers' comments had been presented as they were because shortcomings in the project to which the reviewers had objected earlier had been corrected and that the staff felt that the favorable review was justified. NSF officials, including NSF director H. Guyford Stever, agreed that a fuller explanation of the circumstances which produced the review should have been included.

The ISIS incident appears to have assumed a fair degree of importance in the hearings, not only because it provides a specific instance in which NSF is accused of misuse of the peer review system, but also because it involves a question of Conlan's credibility as well as of NSF's.

Conlan's advice to the subcommittee "is to make the peer review system open and accountable. This means that the 'Old Boy's System' which is so cherished by certain big institutions and the National Academy of Sciences, which benefit from it, must go.

"The peer review system must operate in an environment of *total openness*."

By total openness Conlan means that verbatim reviews and the names of reviewers should be available on request to the principal investigators who submitted grant applications and also to Congress. A Conlan staff member says Conlan would prefer to see the press and public given access as well but hesitates to advocate it without further examination, particularly because of the administrative burden it would place on NSF. [The National Science Board recently revised NSF policy to make verbatim reviews available to the principal investigators concerned and is considering the question of whether identities of reviewers should be made known on the same terms (*Science*, 11 July)].

Reaction on the subcommittee to Conlan's advocacy of opening up peer review

NSF Gains Social Sciences Champion

Richard C. Atkinson, who spoke for the defense at congressional hearings on the National Science Foundation's peer review system, is now, as deputy director, the highest ranking social scientist at NSF.

His installation on 2 June coincides with the agency's reorganization (*Science*, 25 July) which, among other things, raises the status of social science research by putting it in a separate directorate along with biological research. Atkinson, a research psychologist who will be interim head of the new directorate, believes the reorganization is a significant step toward placing social and behavioral sciences within the whole spectrum of science rather than subordinate to the hard sciences.

The NSF job is Atkinson's first venture into the federal bureaucracy. He comes to Washington from the chairmanship of Stanford University's department of psychology, from which he is taking a 2-year leave of absence. He has made significant contributions to cognitive theory, and his immersion in computerized mathematical models of learning and memory theory makes him about the hardest social scientist NSF could find—a circumstance that may be expected to quell the fears of those who are anxious for NSF to retain its emphasis on basic research.

Atkinson, 46, graduated from the University of Chicago at the age of 19 and obtained his Ph.D. from Indiana University. He has published prolifically and is active in the affairs of numerous associations, including the American Psychological Association, on whose board he served for 2 years. He was the founding editor of the *Journal of Mathematical Psychology* and is coauthor with his wife, Rita Atkinson, and E. R. Hilgard of a widely used textbook, *Introduction to Psychology*. He was elected in 1974 to the National Academy of Sciences.

The new deputy director is not one to let the grass grow under his feet. Within a week of his arrival he had spearheaded a major new initiative: a request to the National Academy of Sciences to undertake a study of NSF's programs of support for the social and behavioral sciences. The committee is now being assembled and Herbert Simon of Carnegie-Mellon has been unofficially selected as chairman. It will, over the period of a year and with a budget of \$133,000, review NSF's current programs and recommend future priorities. Atkinson says that in-house studies on social science programs have been inconclusive and that it is time for an outside appraisal. The effort is also clearly aimed at bolstering NSF's position vis-à-vis congressional efforts to interfere with its grant-giving operations. Atkinson believes congressional criticism of NSF's peer review system is unjustified and that there is in fact "incredibly broad participation" in the evaluation of research proposals. The "new problem" for NSF, he says, is that whereas the agency in the past had strong support from the scientific community, scientists are blaming the peer review system when deserving proposals go unfunded. But the real villain is the budget.

Atkinson has already met with Senator William Proxmire (D-Wis.), the man who got the anti-NSF snowball rolling on the Hill, and they found they understood each other quite well. (One of Atkinson's graduate students is teaching sign language to a gorilla, which he thought amusing in view of the senator's derision of a project involving language behavior in chimpanzees.)

Youthful in manner and appearance, Atkinson strikes one as being the type who is regarded as a precocious young man until well into middle age. He is aggressive, and not invariably tolerant with those who don't see things his way (he is impatient with the educational community, for example, because, among other things, it has failed to perceive the value in computer-aided reading instruction, an area in which he has pioneered). So far, anyway, everyone seems to like him.—C.H.