

manent review panels in NSF are available to the public, according to an NSF official who conceded that very few applicants know who even they are. The only place they are listed is in the foundation's annual report.

Although peer review at NIH looks good compared to NSF, it was apparent from some of the questions put to Sherman that some congressmen think NIH too could be more open. While endorsing NIH's custom of publishing the names of

study section members, Sherman rejected the idea that the substance of study section meetings be made public or that the meetings themselves be open. Sherman expressed concern on two counts. Plagiarism might become a problem, he said. Suppose a young scientist from Hawaii submits a proposal which is discussed at an open meeting in Washington, D.C., which might be attended by representatives from one of a number of commercial scientific laboratories. What would stop anyone from

stealing the young scientist's idea? What would stop investigators in a big laboratory from exploiting the idea before that poor young scientist could carry out his own experiments? Representative James H. Scheuer (D-N.Y.) seemed particularly untouched by the possibilities Sherman sketched out, saying first that moral pressure from the scientific community would probably be a real deterrent to stealing and, second, that it might be a good thing to get ideas into the "scientific stream of commerce" more quickly than happens now.

The other argument against opening peer review meetings is that to do so would put an end to confidentiality. No longer could a scientist criticize a colleague without being found out. In fact, one justification offered for keeping the meetings closed was that it protects peer reviewers who may be "overzealous" in their criticisms. Scheuer was quick to answer that, saying that to expose the overzealous to the public eye might well be a good thing.

Openness Solves Problems

Scheuer, by no means sounding like a man who had any desire to dismantle the peer review system, went on to speak about the "cleansing effect" open congressional meetings had had in the past year or so. In the wake of Watergate, congressional reforms were instituted that, among other things, opened mark-up sessions of committees. To many congressmen the idea of negotiating about appropriations in public seemed like an exercise in sheer idiocy. How could we horse trade with people watching? "Well," said Scheuer, answering his own question, "mores can yield to changing times. Total openness solves an awful lot of problems."

It is not entirely impossible that the scientific community can change too. However, NSF apparently is not going to take the lead. In response to a congressional request for the names of its peer reviewers, it sent a list of names in alphabetical order, without identifying what grants they reviewed. Representative John B. Conlan (R-Ariz.), who is one of NSF's severest critics in Congress, calls the list the Hong Kong telephone directory and says, quite rightly, that it is utterly useless in helping Congress do its job of assessing the workings of NSF.

Early in the hearings (*Science*, 8 August), Conlan charged NSF program officers with distorting the views of reviewers in internal summaries. He cited a summary of a review by Philip Morrison of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as an example. Morrison then told reporters that it might be Conlan who was doing the

Briefing

Navy Mississippi Move Approved

A large share of the Navy's oceanographic activities will move from the Washington, D.C., area to Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi, according to an announcement made by the Department of Defense on 25 July. The proposed move has been contested by some university oceanographers who dispute that the new site is suitable for the "center of excellence" in oceanography the Navy has proposed (*Science*, 20 June).

The plan calls for the first of the 1200 employees who will eventually go there to move this summer. The most controversial office to be moved, known as "Code 480," which supports basic university research in oceanography and some of the country's major oceanographic institutions, is scheduled to move in about 1 year.

A member of Congress who has been fighting the move, Marjorie Holt (R-Md.), called it "politics, pure and simple." She was referring to the fact that it will mean more federal jobs in the home state of the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), with many employees probably living nearby in Louisiana, home state of another congressional Pentagon friend, former Representative F. Edward Hebert. But Trent Lott (R-Miss.), the congressman who represents Bay Saint Louis, was quoted as having commented: "Yes, of course there is Senator Stennis, and I'm sure the Navy is pleased to please him. And Hébert, too, so that made it a double goodie."

The question now is whether the geographic removal of "Code 480" from the main offices of the Office of Naval Research (ONR) in Washington portends more fragmentation of the latter group, which has been sponsoring basic research nationwide for more than 20 years. Some sources suggest that the Navy may next seek to move the electronics and the physics programs of ONR, although no specific plans have yet been mentioned. These sources report that higher-ups in the Navy have been trying to tighten control over ONR's basic research programs, that ONR has resisted such controls, and, hence, that relations between ONR and the rest of the department have been strained.

Signs of this strain appeared last week when the head of ONR, Chief of Naval Research Rear Admiral M. Dick Van Orden, retired a year ahead of schedule. In Navy circles, Van Orden was known as a vigorous supporter of basic research. But at a change of command ceremony to mark his retirement last week, with the Navy brass assembled, Van Orden spoke openly of his "failure" to convince the rest of the Navy that the basic research programs should be kept together in one place and that "Code 480" should remain in Washington.

Van Orden, 54, told *Science* that his decision to retire early was "not entirely unrelated" to the Navy's decision to move "Code 480" to Mississippi. He said he had discussed this and other differences of view "amicably" with H. Tyler Marcy, assistant secretary of the Navy for research and development, and told him: "I felt I was not on his team. . . . I felt the Secretary deserves someone working for him who can support his policies loyally."—D.S.