

centrated cruise missile attack.

At the moment there seems to be no consensus among experts as to what mix of carriers the Navy should order, either next year or farther into the future. Schlesinger's program analysis staff has so far played the devil's advocate in the debate, arguing for the midi as a counterweight to the Navy's pleas for more giant carriers. According to one observer, the staff may be pro-midi as a way of "pushing" the Navy in the general direction of building smaller, simpler ships.

Other analysts disagree, saying that the

midi is not even an interim solution to the Navy's problems, and that for all practical purposes the midi will be the same as the *Nimitz* type. They feel the Navy should be shoved, not pushed, to make a "technological jump" into a future in which its carriers are mostly minis and its aircraft mostly VSTOL.

One point which has been made over and over in this debate is how deeply intertwined are the Navy's decisions on carrier procurement and its aircraft programs. For example, a decision to press exclusively for giant or midi carriers will discourage

VSTOL within the Navy and the aviation industry. The future of the F-14 will be bleak if only midis are ordered, since it may be able to land only on the giant carrier's deck. Finally, decisions favoring either the midi or the mini carriers would force the Navy and industry to think in terms of buying and building smaller conventional aircraft. The decisions of Congress and the Navy in the next year or two on carriers will have an impact on naval research, development and procurement, and, indeed, naval strategy, that will hardly be trivial.—DEBORAH SHAPLEY

Kleppe for Interior: Senators Give an Old Friend Kid Glove Treatment

After the brief and more or less perfunctory round of hearings held on his nomination, Thomas S. Kleppe seems, at this writing on 30 September, a sure bet to be confirmed by the Senate as the new Secretary of the Interior. As Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), the chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, noted in opening the hearings, Kleppe's record in the fields of natural resource management, energy resource development, and environmental protection has been "modest"—some would say virtually nonexistent—and his record as administrator of the scandal-ridden Small Business Administration (SBA) for the last 4½ years has been widely questioned (*Science*, 19 September). Nevertheless, Kleppe was treated gently, and the job at Interior is expected to be his unless a "smoking pistol"—a Senate aide's shorthand for some particularly glaring evidence of unfitness—should turn up.

The hearings, held on 23 and 25 September, took up about a day and a half altogether, and involved the testimony of about a dozen witnesses, only a few of whom knew anything about Kleppe, good or bad. Senator Jackson opened the hearings by observing that the Secretary of the Interior is "the people's trustee for the total environment" and that success in this office involves making difficult decisions in which energy resource development and environmental needs must be weighed and reconciled. Then, Jackson said that the committee would want Kleppe to respond to a wide range of questions bearing on his

fitness, questions going to both his attitudes about resource management and about his record at the SBA. From that point on, however, it became increasingly clear that the hearings were to be little more than a friendly romp.

Two Republicans on the committee, Senator Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon and Senator James A. McClure of Idaho, both noted that Kleppe first came to Washington in 1967 as part of the "class of the 90th Congress" to which they also had been elected. "I welcome before this committee a man I entered Congress with some years ago," said McClure, and then added that he had "noticed some similar fans [of Kleppe's] in the back of the room a minute ago."

Senator Milton R. Young, a Republican from Kleppe's home state of North Dakota, said that since Kleppe—who lost a Senate race in 1970—had become administrator of the SBA in 1971, the agency had made 122,000 business loans totaling about \$7.9 billion, which makes up nearly half the total volume of business loans made by the SBA during its entire 23-year history. In this, one could read the unspoken message that an agency head doesn't hand out that much money without making friends and scoring political points with a good many members of Congress. Young went on to say that Kleppe, a hail-fellow-well-met, is a good man on a horse, "a great outdoorsman," an "excellent bowler," and a keen competitor on the golf links. He could have added that Kleppe, both during his two terms of Congress and

since then, has proved himself both a formidable handball player in the House of Representatives' gym and one of the more jovial presences in its steam bath.

Even before the first question had been asked of the nominee, Senator Paul J. Fannin (R-Ariz.), the Interior committee's ranking Republican, had this to say about him: "As a member of Congress, Mr. Kleppe was known for his open and forthright manner, and as administrator of SBA he established a reputation as an effective and vigorous leader." Among other things glossed over by this characterization was the fact that serious charges by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of political favoritism in personnel appointments and the flouting of civil service laws have reached to Kleppe's immediate office—charges which, if proved, will lead to the removal from federal office of the man who for nearly 3½ years served as Kleppe's special assistant.

Senator Jackson did touch on the matter of the alleged political favoritism at the SBA in a question to Kleppe. But Kleppe said, "I have bent over backwards to [see] that our agency has not been partisan-oriented, because small business does not know the difference between a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent, any more than they know the difference between a black, a white, or an Indian, Eskimo, or anybody else. Small business is small business, and we refuse to bend to the political pressures that we have been alleged to have done. . . . Then, to get a Civil Service allegation that says, 'Kleppe, you are political,' that hurts." Having so said, Kleppe simply referred the committee to his written response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) in regard to the CSC allegations.

The most serious of the CSC charges pertained to alleged favoritism in the appointment of four SBA district directors, including three appointed since Kleppe took over as administrator. In one in-

stance, the incumbent district director for Montana was given a choice between accepting a lower grade position in Montana or a transfer to Denver (he ultimately declined the transfer). His replacement as district director turned out to be the retiring Republican state chairman, who was actually hired at a higher grade than that of his predecessor.

In his response to questions by the GAO, Kleppe dismissed this particular matter summarily. The proposed transfer of the incumbent to Denver was simply explained as in the best interests of the service, and the appointment of the outgoing Republican chairman under the sponsorship of the new Republican chairman was also described as having been neither illegal or inappropriate. The explanations offered in this case pretty well typified the kind of reply Kleppe made to the CSC allegations, which will in due course be heard by an administrative law judge.

Kleppe is so little known by environmental and resource user groups that they have shown no inclination to take a public position on his nomination, pro or con. In fact, the only witness at the hearings to challenge the nomination directly was William H. Wilcox, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, who spoke both for himself and for Pennsylvania's Governor Milton J. Shapp, a Democrat. Wilcox complained bitterly of the SBA's performance in administering disaster loans to Pennsylvania victims of the devastating Susquehanna River flood of June 1972.

"To people in chaos, SBA brought more chaos," said Wilcox, citing long delays in the making of loans, arbitrary deadlines, and other problems. Wilcox said that even where the record of a Senate inquiry in 1973 into the post-Agnes disaster relief contains praise for the SBA—and there was some praise for Kleppe personally from a federal judge who headed a Flood Recovery Task Force—it was heavily qualified.

Wilcox indicated that one dispute that arose between the Pennsylvania state officials and the SBA bespoke a particular inflexibility and insensitivity on Kleppe's part with respect to environmental and land management issues. "For months after the flood," he said, "SBA insisted that flood victims could only use their disaster loans to move back into the flood plain. Relocations to a new property away from the river and out of the flood plain were discouraged, even when the flood victim's home had been severely damaged. . . . I expressed my dismay about this situation in a letter to Senator Scott. Mr. Kleppe responded to the senator that it was 'essentially a state and local problem.'" Wilcox

added that this stance violated a 1966 presidential executive order that directed all agencies to try to avoid having federal money support "uneconomic, hazardous, or unnecessary use of flood plains."

The Interior committee was to meet again on 1 October to consider the Kleppe nomination, and it may vote to recommend his confirmation at that time. On the other hand, it could choose to follow the advice of Common Cause and look further into Kleppe's performance at the SBA and his attitude toward issues facing the Department of the Interior.

The throwing of puff balls at Kleppe under the guise of serious questioning can no doubt be explained in part by Stanley Hathaway's resignation in late July as Secretary of the Interior after little more than a month in office. Hathaway was rigorously questioned by the committee on his record as governor of Wyoming, and he apparently took it in a deeply personal way. In any case, the state of "depression" that led him to resign was attributed by some Republican senators as having been largely brought on by the confirmation hearings.

A further explanation for the gentle treatment of Kleppe may lie in the fact that everybody now wants to see the vacancy at Interior, where unsettled issues have been piling up, filled as speedily as possible. Kent Frizzell, Interior's solicitor and acting secretary, is expected to be nominated by the President as under secretary (a position vacant since mid-January) when Kleppe is confirmed. Once a candidate for the secretary's job itself, Frizzell has strong support among Senate Republicans (*Science*, 29 August).

Although the foregoing sentiments and considerations are understandable, many observers of the confirmation process are likely to share a hope expressed at the hearings by Common Cause. It was that the Interior committee should try to formulate a clear set of standards by which Kleppe and other nominees for high posts can be evaluated. This is a much more subtle and difficult task than it might first appear. But one could certainly start with the recognition that a nominee should not be given a clear run just because nobody has found a smoking pistol.

—LUTHER J. CARTER

POINT OF VIEW

A Slap at the Bishops of Asilomar

The recent Asilomar conference on recombinant DNA molecules has been generally praised for its preaching of caution, a decision seen both as provident and reasonably self-denying. A quite different view is voiced by Erwin Chargaff of Columbia University in the August-September issue of The Sciences. Chargaff's crucial work on the structure of DNA passed unrecognized by the Nobel committee that distributed prizes for the discovery, but last month he received the National Medal of Science. His remarks, the strongest criticism of the Asilomar conference yet to appear, occur in the context of an essay deploring some of the more practical directions along which pure science has been driven:

Knowing that the desire to improve mankind has led to some of the most horrible atrocities recorded by history, it was with a feeling of deep melancholy that I read about the peculiar conference that took place recently in the neighborhood of Palo Alto. At this Council of Asilomar there congregated the molecular bishops and church fathers from all over the world, in order to condemn the heresies of which they themselves had been the first and the principal perpetrators. This was probably the first time in history that the incendiaries formed their own fire brigade. The edict published in due course, which lists the various forbidden items, reads like a combined curriculum vitae of the conveners of the conference.

The possibilities of splicing pieces of DNA into another one, e.g. that of a plasmid, which will now go on reproducing many copies of the insert, will certainly be investigated in all possible directions. The itch to be particularly useful to humanity by introducing such homegrown "genes" into patients lacking them will not be withstood. Whether Frankenstein's little biological monsters will be grafted on successfully, I cannot say, nor what else may be introduced at the same time unintentionally. Were I not so averse to rancid science fiction, I should say that the spreading of experimental cancer may be confidently expected.