Sciences and accepted by the central administration. The implication is that the assemblies have been encouraged to exercise a measure of home rule in policy matters and that Handler is reluctant either to second-guess them or to interpret the reasons for their action publicly.

The big question that all of this leaves unanswered is what criteria the NRC will apply in continuing or disbanding committees. The Assembly of Life Sciences executive committee also decided to end its Committee on Prosthetics Research and Development after study by a visiting committee. In this case, however, the report was apparently made available to the chairman, so such documents do not appear to be automatically sacrosanct. The assembly's Committee on Toxicology, founded in 1947, was studied and found worthy of continuation, so not all standing committees, obviously, will fall.

Visiting committees are a relatively new phenomenon at the NRC, and there is clearly a feeling that a more candid appraisal is likely if members of such a committee are assured that their views will be kept confidential. There seems to be much less reason for the executive committee to withhold its reasons for action.

Interest in such actions and criteria are likely to grow. The assembly, for example, is said to be launching a study of its Food and Nutrition Board, which has been a target of critics in the past because of substantial financing of its work by industry. And other NRC assemblies are going through similar exercises.

Perhaps some general rules are being applied. In the Handler era, an attitude has been fostered that committees should be formed for specific tasks and then disbanded when the task is accomplished. Also there is a heightened sensitivity to avoiding ties with industry that lend at least the appearance of conflict of interest.

Given the veil of confidentiality that has descended on the action on the three committees, it is hard to say if these factors were important. But the Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence and the Drug Research Board were, in their own ways, among the best known of NRC committees, and the termination inevitably leaves the members and partisans feeling dis-Established.

The Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence dates back through several name changes and nearly 50 years to the Committee on Drug Addiction. Until the 1960's, the committee played a pivotal role in the narcotics research field by effectively controlling supplies of narcotics available for experimental purposes and limiting access to the field to a relatively small group of like-minded researchers. Under the domination of the late Nathan B. Eddy, the committee for most of four decades concentrated on a quest for a nonaddicting analgesic and on keeping new drugs with addicting properties off the market (*Science*, 21 Dec. 1973). For much of its life, the committee maintained close ties with agencies responsible for enforcement laws. Harry J. Anslinger, the redoubtable commissioner of the old Bureau of Narcotics, was an admirer and sometime member of the committee. Critics of the committee charged that it abetted official policy which treated addiction as a crime rather than an illness and favored controls which made it difficult for physicians to treat addicts or for researchers to study narcotics addiction.

In later years, the committee broadened its views and research aims, but through its grants program it continued to play a pivotal role in screening and evaluating new drugs and in narcotics research. The growth of federal interest in narcotics problems, however, has long since ended the virtual monopoly which the NRC committee once held in the field. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), is the major granting agency for both basic and clinical research in the narcotics field and now, for example, directly funds a monkey colony at the University of Michigan, a major facility for the testing of abuse

Nader Gives a Lesson to Psychologists

Ralph Nader has not run out of steam or originality, as attested by the address he delivered to an enthusiastic crowd at the September meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA).

According to an article in the November *APA Monitor*, Nader delivered a detailed broadside against social scientists, and psychologists in particular, for neglecting their responsibilities to the consumer movement.

Psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, he said, are concentrating on the study of individuals and noninstitutionalized groups while ignoring the large institutions, corporate and governmental, that have incalculable influence and power over the lives of individuals.

Psychologists, he said, study the individual mind outside of the institutional context; they do not study the corporate mind, or the corporate executive's mind. Yet, he asserted, "We're a society where most things that are done between people are done through the mechanisms of relatively large organizations."

Nader appears to have developed this theme after observing the travails of a Nader-sponsored team that has been conducting an intensive study, started in 1974, of the Educational Testing Service in Princeton. The initial aim of the study was to look at test bias and discern ways in which educational tests penalized or overlooked qualities such as drive, idealism, altruism, and creativity. But what they ended up being struck by was ETS's power—to stigmatize students, give them warped or bloated self-images, determine who goes to college and, in effect, to allocate "millions of careers."

The study of institutions is the study of power, said Nader, and social scientists are afraid to get into such politically charged areas. Sociologists will study a small town or a mass movement, but they won't study institutions such as Exxon or the Pentagon. Anthropologists investigate tribal societies, but not the U.S. court system.

The failure of social scientists to apply their methodological approaches to institutional structures and pathologies, noted Nader, means that these structures continue to be taken for granted and society is expending enormous energies in palliating the destruction they wreak—environmental poisons, auto accidents, and so forth—instead of attacking the problem at its roots.

Until recently, for example, the approach to preventing highway accidents has been to exhort drivers to drive safely rather than to get the auto industry to build safer cars. Likewise, high-energy consuming industries talk of the need for the consumer to adopt a less profligate "life-style"—but "the issue of life-style never applies to corporations." Said Nader, "Is it a technical problem? Is it an economic problem? Or, is it more basically a psychological problem of power?"—C.H.