

based public review of the existing NIH guidelines and would permit open debate on issues given little attention by the NIH Drafting Committee or the office of the director," such as whether the human gut bacterium *Escherichia coli* is a suitable host for gene-splicing work.

Friends of the Earth believes that a moratorium should precede the review: there should be a public debate "so that an official moratorium on recombinant DNA research can be imposed pending further public investigation." As for the Sierra Club, its board of directors decid-

ed on 9 January that, pending further information and discussion, "the Sierra Club opposes the creation of recombinant DNA for any purpose, save in a small number of maximum containment labs operated or controlled directly by the federal government."

What all these activities represent, at state and city council level, by industry and environmentalists, is an extended exercise in public education about the gene-splice technique and its implications. The calls to prohibit or slow down the research seem threatening and irratio-

nal to those scientists who first pointed to the risks and who believe, with some measure of justice, that there should be a presumption in favor of their estimate of how to deal with them. Yet the bottom line reached by most public bodies so far is to endorse the NIH guidelines with minor changes. Whatever further restrictions emerge from the present round of debate, the research will at least be proceeding on the basis of informed public consent, a desirable and probably inescapable condition for a technique of such consequence.—NICHOLAS WADE

Carter Appointments: Fresh Moves on Sea Law, Arms Control

In its inaugural week, the embryonic Carter Administration took several bold steps toward fulfilling the President's campaign pledges to work vigorously toward a sea law treaty, an accord on strategic arms, and a comprehensive nuclear test ban. Two strong appointments were announced: that of Elliot L. Richardson to head the U.S. law of the sea delegation and that of Paul C. Warnke to be chief negotiator for the strategic arms limitations talks (SALT) and director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

In addition, Washington seemed smitten by a fever of gossip about who is under consideration for which high-level jobs, and in science circles this naturally centered on who would be appointed presidential science adviser.

As of this writing, Wolfgang Panofsky, of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, was still rumored a likely choice for the refurbished job of presidential science adviser, if only because neither of the other two most frequently mentioned scientists are likely to end up with the job. Lewis S. Branscomb, of the IBM Corporation, who figured during the campaign and transition period, seemed a less likely choice for the President, who has encountered criticism for having already appointed three cabinet members who were on the board of directors of IBM. Jerome B. Wiesner of MIT seemed unlikely to accept the job were it offered. Other names which have been mentioned are John S. Baldeschwieler of the California Institute of Technology and Robert Charpie of the Cabot Corporation.

There was, in the first week, an encouraging development for ocean science in the appointment of Richardson, President Nixon's and President Ford's cabinet officer for all seasons, as U.S. Ambassador to the Law of the Sea Conference. The appointment was barely announced when Richardson, who only days before had been the outgoing Secretary of Commerce, held a 2½-hour meeting with the State Department's sea law staff. The reaction of one staffer indicated the contrast to the sleepy months that had preceded. "Obviously, Richardson is a plum for the law of the sea. We're delighted. He obviously knows his way around. Now we have lots of work to do." The next session of the 140-nation conference will be held in New York, in May.

On substantive questions, Richardson seemed qualified to iron out a number of long-standing differences—more properly termed wars—which have grown up among federal agencies over what should be the U.S. position at the talks. "He's had four cabinet posts. When he deals with the cabinet, we won't have to go to them hat in hand," explains another sea law expert. The U.S. team has been particularly at odds on the ocean mining issue, which has complicated U.S. attempts to exert leadership at the conference and has become the central knot around which the negotiation is entangled. Several sea law experts last week expressed hope that Richardson, who has a well-known facility for mastering extremely complicated issues, may be able to work out a successful solution to the conference's ocean

mining snarl, where, last April, Henry Kissinger's 11th-hour proposals failed. Richardson has already asked for a review of the issue.

The U.S. delegation also seems more likely to produce a new position on the question because of the dismissal of sea law bureaucrat Leigh Ratiner, Ocean Resources Administrator of the Department of the Interior, who, for years, has largely controlled the U.S. position on deep-sea mining and whose views were often at odds with others on the U.S. delegation. Ratiner left the government for private law practice as a result of a routine house cleaning of 41 mid-level officials by incoming Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus.

Help for Ocean Science?

As for ocean science, John Norton Moore, former deputy chief of the U.S. team commented that Richardson may also be able to exercise the "leadership" that Moore feels is needed to rescue oceanography from its current, dismal future (*Science*, 4 June 1976). Because of a last-minute wobble in U.S. negotiating strategy at the last session, countries with coastlines that oceanographers are interested in studying were gaining power over the freedom of scientific ships to operate in their waters—power which some American scientists fear will drown their activities in a sea of red tape.

There are some final, political dimensions to the Richardson appointment that were noted last week by a number of observers. Carter, by naming a prominent Republican who has also served in a key position as U.S. Ambassador to England, is sending other nations a bipartisan signal designed to make them sit up and take greater note of any new U.S. proposals. Thus he is strengthening the U.S. hand at the bargaining table. Underlying this strength is a simple, political truth that other nations will easily perceive: any treaty submitted to the Senate

by so prominent a Republican on behalf of a Democratic Administration will stand a good chance of ratification.

Another key appointment was that of Warnke, who was the arms control community's first choice for the job, to the job of ACDA director and chief U.S. negotiator for SALT. Warnke apparently was offered the job well before the inauguration and, according to one source, "agonized for 2 weeks" about whether to take the job, and then said no. After the inauguration, however, he reconsidered and said yes.

The Warnke appointment is considered a strong one because Warnke, who served in the Defense Department during the Johnson years, as general counsel and as assistant secretary for international strategic affairs, is also well remembered from that period for having been an early dove on the Vietnam war. Since then, while in private law practice, Warnke has written and spoken about the need for "restraint" in the arms race. By making Warnke both ACDA director and chief SALT negotiator, the Carter Administration is believed to be planning to strengthen that agency. When the SALT negotiations began in the early 1970's, the ACDA director of that time, Gerard C. Smith, was given the job of chief negotiator. But the duties were split later by the Nixon Administration, in a move that was widely interpreted as a weakening of the ACDA director's powers, and hence of the agency itself.

Also in his first week, President Carter made a bold start toward a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty—a goal long sought by scientists and arms controllers. In his first press interview as President, Carter followed up on a major campaign pledge by saying, "I would like to proceed quickly and aggressively with a comprehensive test ban. I am in favor of eliminating the testing of all nuclear devices, instantly and completely."

It was a bold, headline-making statement—announcing the resurrection of a goal that has eluded American presidents since the late 1950's. But it left several key ambiguities—one of which was whether Carter would seek a ban only on nuclear weapons "testing"—which would include weapons tests but not peaceful nuclear explosions (PNE's).

The Soviets have a large PNE program for earth moving, ore fracturing, and gas extraction, to which they are very politically attached, and persuading them to abandon it has often been described as a difficult goal. At week's end, Carter spokesmen had not clarified whether indeed the Administration wanted a total

ban on both nuclear weapons tests and PNE's.

Another ambiguity was the fate of a pair of much-criticized treaties (*Science*, 18 June 1976) negotiated with the Soviet Union by the Ford Administration that limit nuclear weapons tests and PNE

explosions to 150 kilotons in yield. The treaties have been opposed by the arms control community for setting too high a limit on yields, and for serving to delay the cause of a comprehensive or zero-kiloton ban. The treaties have been a source of embarrassment to the U.S.

Alligator Protections Loosened

The population of the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) has increased severalfold since the species was classified as "endangered" in 1967. Now, the Fish and Wildlife Service, responding to reports of increasing "human-alligator conflicts" in the South, has issued a ruling reclassifying the animals as "threatened" in Florida and coastal areas of four other southern states.

As endangered species, alligators may only be taken (killed) for scientific purposes or to enhance the population. With the animals reclassified as threatened, state officials will be allowed to engage in "limited, lethal removal" where this is thought necessary to protect human lives. The ruling affects about 570,000 of the total estimated population of 734,384 inhabiting the alligator's natural range. Most of these live in Florida; the rest are in coastal areas of Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas.

The move has been made in response to pressure from southern states that has built up over the past 2 years, which, according to a spokesman from the Fish and Wildlife Service, has been intensified by pressure from dealers in crocodilian hides.

Environmentalists, according to Lewis Regenstein of The Fund for Animals, see the reclassification as totally unwarranted. Regenstein says it amounts to "basically reestablishing the commercial alligator hide market." States can auction off the hides and, once hides are reintroduced into trade, he says, poachers will be on the move and it will be impossible to ensure that the animals are taken legally. He also says the alligators aren't moving in on the people, rather the reverse pertains—alligator habitats are being chewed away by waterfront housing developments. In the words of a Fish and Wildlife official, "their backyard used to be the alligator's front yard." The wildlife official adds that a study in Florida showed a significant correlation between areas of calls to the state about alligator nuisances and areas plied by known poachers—which might suggest that complaints have been trumped up to get the state in a dither.

State officials maintain, however, that illegal activities can be effectively controlled, just as they are supposed to be in Louisiana where there is a 1-month alligator hunting season. They say the alligators are getting out of hand, and that simply picking up intruders and putting them back in the swamp will not solve the problem. According to an official of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fisheries Commission, the population in that state has risen by 30 percent a year to an estimated 600,000. He says the commission received 10,000 complaints last year and had to send people out to relocate 3,000 alligators. He says ditching, diking, and canal-building in the southern part of the state have created a sort of alligator highway system which enables them to show up wherever there is water. Residents of waterfront communities help small alligators overcome their fear of people by feeding them marshmallows and such. "It is hard for people to look down the road" and foresee that a 3- to 4-foot alligator is going to turn into something bigger—perhaps 11 feet—and not so cute, he says. It is only the so-called "tame" alligators that attack people.

So far, casualties have not been great—eight injuries and one fatality in Florida in the past 3 years, according to an official from that state. However, he says, some people are getting "sort of hysterical" about the problem. In recent years the alligator has come to be looked on as a symbol of conservation in the state. Now, it is feared, unless restrictions are loosened, the animals will lose their public support and people will start taking the law into their own hands.—C.H.

government as well, because the Soviets have violated a gentleman's agreement not to detonate blasts larger than 150 kilotons in the period before the treaties are ratified by each country (*Science*, 27 August 1976).

Late last week, the new State Department spokesman, Frederick Z. Brown, told reporters that the Carter Administration would like to see the Senate ratify both treaties as a "way station" on the road to a comprehensive ban. Ironically,

then, as a means of fulfilling his own campaign pledges, Carter's first order of business may be to put his stamp of approval on the unfinished business of the previous, Republican Administration.—DEBORAH SHAPLEY

Congress: House Redistributes Jurisdiction over Energy

The House of Representatives, dominated 2 years ago by fractious reformers, has unobtrusively organized itself for the 95th Congress. But the results of earlier changes are still working themselves out and this is nowhere more evident than in the energy sector.

The most conspicuous impact on committee operations in the new Congress has been caused as a consequence of the redistribution of the functions of the moribund Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE). The JCAE's jurisdiction has been cut up among five committees—Armed Services, Interior, International Relations, Commerce, and Science and Technology.*

The JCAE was a committee at bay in the latter days of the last Congress (*Science*, 19 November 1976) and was given its quietus on 4 January when the House, in the process of adopting the rules for the 95th Congress, provided for the division of jurisdiction.

By most estimates, the demise of the JCAE was attributable mainly to the strong feeling in the House, particularly among newer members, that the committee had been too long and too much the uncritical proponent of nuclear power and had failed to raise legitimate questions about the safety and economics of nuclear energy.

Some observers, however, have been quick to note that the transfer of jurisdiction could mean a shift from excessive centralization of authority to excessive decentralization. Most obviously, it will

be difficult to define jurisdictional boundaries—the line between the responsibilities of the Commerce and Interior committees may prove particularly hard to draw. And the move seems to further encourage the chronic tendency in Congress to fractionalize authority. The tendency is particularly strong in areas which are regarded as important or prestigious. And energy is currently very fashionable; it has been estimated that more than a score of panels already have pieces of the action in the two houses.

A practical problem will be to coordinate energy activities of House committees with the corresponding committees in the Senate, which will also be expected to take over JCAE functions. The Senate has been moving toward the same sort of reform of its committee system which the House began in the early 1970's. Final agreement on a compromise is expected imminently, but the senators have been advancing with the same sort of hesitation step which the House demonstrated in its own dance of reform.

Another problem of parallelism will arise in dealing with Executive agencies. In this sector, the claims of committees on agency officials often overlap and conflict. One House committee staff member said of the Hill approach to the new arrangements, "I don't think that anyone understands it yet. We'll just have to go through a cycle and see how it works out."

Reservations about the decentralization of authority were aptly expressed in the 4 January floor discussion by Representative John D. Young (D-Tex.). Young's remarks were both pointed and a touch poignant since he had been a member of the JCAE for some years and under the system of alternating chairmen between House and Senate would have

headed the committee for the 95th Congress. As he put it:

... it has long been my feeling and deep conviction that the interests of this country and indeed the interests of this House in the field of energy require and I think will ultimately demand that all energy, whether it be nuclear or nonnuclear, be within the jurisdiction and authority of one committee of this House. . . . I was pleased to read and hear public statements made, as I understand it, by the President-elect of the United States and by our distinguished Speaker, that it is their intention to move in the direction of having one committee to handle the matters of energy. Obviously, with the fragmentation that has existed in the nonnuclear field, some committees at some point are going to have to be willing to step back and be deprived of some authority and responsibility in their various fields.

The transfer of authority in the House over domestic regulation of nuclear energy to the Interior Committee coincides with the rise to the chairmanship of Morris Udall (D-Ariz.). Udall, a liberal Democrat, has a strong record as an environmentalist and a reputation as a skeptic about nuclear energy. Udall has been an advocate and sponsor of legislation for strict regulation of strip mining and he is expected to press immediately for revival of the sort of strip-mine control legislation which passed both houses but was vetoed by President Ford (*Science*, 22 October 1976).

Udall will continue as chairman of Interior's subcommittee on energy and the environment which will take over the JCAE's writ on regulatory matters. It will be the legislative subcommittee for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and will handle the NRC's budget authorization. One legislative initiative expected from Udall in the regulatory area is a bill giving states increased influence in the process through which construction permits for nuclear plants are issued.

The shift of the JCAE's jurisdiction over research to the House Science and Technology Committee, chaired by Representative Olin E. Teague (D-Tex.), makes the latter committee more than ever the focus in the House for those interested in energy R & D. Largely because of election casualties there are a number of realignments and reassignments within the committee, but the sub-

*Under the formula incorporated in the House rules the Armed Services Committee gets responsibility for overseeing nuclear energy for military purposes, Interior and Insular Affairs for domestic regulation, International Relations for export of nuclear technology, Interstate and Foreign Commerce for facilities regulation and oversight, and Science and Technology for all nuclear research including jurisdiction over the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA).