

report observed that the Smithsonian erred in not notifying congressional committees of its intent to purchase the collection of the Cooper Union museum—even though that was done with privately raised money. Stevens also thought Congress should have been in on the purchase, particularly since, as it turned out, some federal appropriations were required for operations and construction (total federal contributions have been about \$1.5 million). Smithsonian officials seem to have felt that the way they handled the purchase was all right since it had the approval of the Regents, six of whom are members of Congress.

Just what the Regents can approve on their own has not been cleared up. For example, Stevens appeared to be alarmed upon learning that the Smithsonian could—in theory, if not in practice—dispose of its research institute on the Chesapeake Bay (a private acquisition) without congressional sanction. “These must become federal properties if we are to continue to fund them with federal taxpayers’ dollars,” he opined.

Although the Smithsonian’s top officials claim to be unruffled by the criticism, one official told *Science* that there is considerable concern that Congress is going to try to “federalize” the institution. Federalization, says another, would result in the termination of adventurous, public-oriented activities (such as the annual Folklife Festival and the magazine) that are supported with private funds; would result in the subordination of artistic and scholarly judgment to politics; and would constrict research. Officials also claim a change in status would violate the trust of many private donors who have made gifts with the understanding that the Smithsonian was a nonfederal institution.

However uneasy Congress may feel about the Smithsonian’s independent ways, there have been few questions raised about the quality of the museum’s collections or of the institution’s core of research and scholarly endeavor.

The Smithsonian’s scientific establishment, which includes 300 Ph.D.-level scientists, enjoys a solid reputation and, according to assistant secretary for science David Challinor, the institution is “fully competitive with universities” as an employer.

Smithsonian science is best known for its strength in systematics, which is founded on the collection of the Museum of Natural History, and astrophysics, which is done at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory in Cambridge, Mass., and at Mt. Hopkins, Arizona,



Original Smithsonian building

where the institution has a telescope. Virtually all of the 106 museum scientists are also curators who do research on the collections and go on frequent field trips. The astrophysical lab has 100 scientists, the majority of whom work on government contracts. The rest are at other labs: the Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies, the Fort Pierce Bureau for marine research in Florida; the Radiation Biology Laboratory in Maryland; the Tropical Research Institute in Panama; and the National Zoo.

Challinor claims that Smithsonian scientists do well by any measure—ability to get research money, publications, and

membership in scientific societies, review committees, and the National Academy of Sciences. There are, in fact, ten NAS members in addition to Ripley himself (whose election is regarded by some as an honorific gesture, more in recognition of his position than the quality of his research), and the late astronomer Donald Menzel. The astrophysical lab’s current director, George Field, turned down membership a couple of years ago to protest the fact that the NAS still takes on classified research.

The institution however, gives the impression of being something of an ivory tower because so much of its work is in basic research. It has, for instance, been monitoring ultraviolet solar radiation since 1909—long before people generally recognized the purpose of such a study. “Only the Smithsonian is crazy enough to do a nonsexy long term thing like this,” says Challinor.

Science absorbs about \$40 million of the total annual budget of about \$120 mil-

Warnke Stuck with Verification Task

A little-noticed amendment to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) authorization bill that passed the House on 3 May would require ACDA director Paul C. Warnke to file “timely” reports to Congress on the country’s ability to verify all existing and proposed arms control agreements. He would also have to notify Congress of any “degradation” in that capability. But the motives and likely impact of the amendment are widely believed to signify further hard going for Mr. Warnke, whose Senate confirmation nearly foundered on charges he was too “soft.”

In introducing the amendment, its sponsor, Edward J. Derwinski (R-Ill.), limited his explanation to a few colorless comments about the need for more “effective” verification reporting to the Congress. But Robert Lagomarsino (R-Calif.), rising to support the amendment, spoke what was probably on many of the congressmen’s minds. He noted Warnke’s decision, effective days before, to abolish the ACDA Verification Bureau, and, in a pointed disagreement, said the amendment was needed “so that there is no misunderstanding in anyone’s mind that the United States has not downgraded the importance of verification.”

The amendment’s impact, some congressional liberals fear, could put Warnke into conflict with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which now performs verification on several treaties, coordinates the verification activities of other intelligence agencies, and reports on the subject to Congress. Liberals further fear that the lengthy, exhaustive ACDA reports which would be required on all arms control proposals could be used by his foes to harass Warnke, whose past statements on verification issues were subjected to lengthy, hostile cross-examination during the confirmation battle.

The amendment is given some chance of surviving House-Senate conference since the House passed it by a hefty margin of 259 to 148, and since Warnke and ACDA are lying low on the subject. “The Director feels that the agency can do the job if the Congress so wishes,” says an agency official in a less-than-hair-raising comment. ACDA apparently sees the amendment’s language as sufficiently vague that it could comply without creating too much of a stir. But whatever difference the amendment eventually makes, at the moment it indicates the hair-trigger sensitivity of congressional conservatives to Warnke’s every move.—D.S.