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LETTERS

Intergovernmental Science Panel

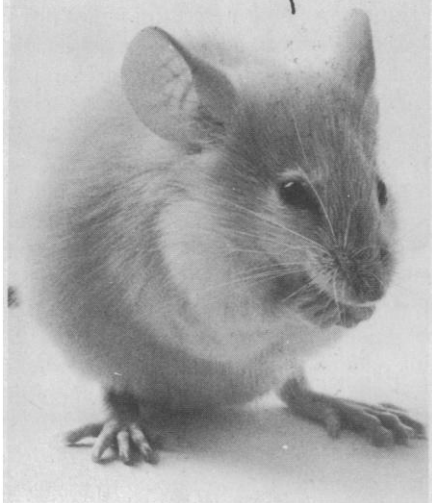
William D. Carey (Editorial, 25 Nov., p. 785) is incorrect in stating that, as a result of President Carter's reorganization of the White House, "the Intergovernmental Science, Engineering and Technology Advisory Panel [ISETAP] came to a premature close when it was abolished and its functions 'transferred to the President.'" ISETAP is active and, in fact, the reorganization is designed to strengthen it. The Carter Administration is committed to maintaining and supporting this link with state and local governments concerning science and technology matters.

ISETAP is being rechartered as an advisory committee by Executive Order. Responsibilities for the central staffing are being transferred to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), primarily to strengthen ties between ISETAP and OMB. The acting director of OMB voiced his strong support for ISETAP in a letter to the heads of eight of the major federal departments and agencies with extensive domestic research programs. He requested that the agencies submit their plans to him for how they intended to work with ISETAP. Federal agencies are cooperating with five ISETAP task forces and are providing staff support to the panel.

The task forces are working with the agencies to strengthen ties between the federal government and the state and local government community. They are also holding briefings at which senior officials from various federal agencies are describing their R & D and technology transfer programs and the ways in which they involve state and local governments in setting R & D agendas. Briefings have been received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Health Education, and Welfare. Others are scheduled to be received from the National Science Foundation (in December) and from the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency (early next year).

ISETAP now has a staff of five full-time professionals, all with extensive state or local government backgrounds, and I expect there will be at least two more by the end of the year. Staff members currently include a former mayor, city manager, director of research for a regional government, director of research for a county human services agency, and an administrative assistant to a governor.

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ISETAP is alive and well, I look forward to my continued role as chairman of ISETAP and to working with state and local government officials through ISETAP to help bring the benefits of science and technology to bear on the problems of states, counties, and cities.

FRANK PRESS

*Office of Science and Technology
Policy, Executive Office of the
President, Washington, D.C. 20500*

The panel was in fact abolished by the reorganization plan as a congressionally mandated arm of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Its reappearance in another form is reassuring. What counts is that Press evidently intends to seek results.—W.D.C.

Solar Energy: The Prospects for OTEC

The Research News article on ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC) by William D. Metz (14 Oct., p. 178) discusses an important renewable energy source for the United States and the world. We feel that it gives an unnecessarily pessimistic appraisal of the prospects for OTEC as a commercially competitive, base-loaded (24 hour a day) source of electric power. As an industry participant in the Department of Energy OTEC program, we are convinced that a 100-megawatt OTEC demonstration plant can be operating by about 1985 and that OTEC can supply a significant part of U.S. electric power at affordable rates by the year 2000.

Much of the information in Metz's article is drawn from a recent review of OTEC by the Panel on Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion of the Assembly of Engineering's Marine Board. The panel review is explicitly based on information available through December 1976, and several of the technical questions that it raises are in the process of being answered—most notably the fear that biofouling would bring OTEC operation to a quick halt. The Department of Energy is also taking steps to remedy the management deficiencies noted by the panel.

The Marine Board panel does not question the technical feasibility of OTEC, merely the time scale of development and the economic viability of the commercial OTEC plants. It is true that there are engineering problems to be solved and that OTEC may not be fully competitive until second or third genera-

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