vard Corporation to cut it in on the results of the University's mammoth fund drive planned to begin next year, the first since 1969, in which it is seeking to raise a quarter of a billion dollars. Another way would be for the museum to launch its own fund drive. The museum is slated to get some of the money it needs from the fund drive, but the Harvard Corporation has not given it permission to launch its own. Every tub on its own bottom, but the tubs cannot all go around looking for new bottoms at once or the potential donors will become confused and frightened.

That leaves the third way, says Lamberg-Karlovsky, which is to "look at the function of the museum, see how individual collections enhance that function," and sell something.

It has been suggested that Lamberg-Karlovsky is trying to twist Harvard's arm by causing such a stir over the proposed deaccessioning that the university will feel compelled to ante up more money. But Sturtevant points out that if that were his motive he could choose something like Mimbres pots to sell. The Peabody has some 2000 of these pre-Columbian funerary pots from New Mexico, some of them poorly documented and therefore of modest anthropological value. But as fine art objects they would fetch a huge price. Such a sale would also cause a far greater uproar among anthropologists than would the sale of Indian paintings by non-Indians.

Deliberations are moving with exceeding caution. Before anything is put up for sale, the museum will have to determine the legal status of the items and all the conditions, explicit or implied, that attended their joining the collections. The mode of sale—whether by auction or through an agent—must be determined. It has already been agreed that if the Inmans are sold they will have to stay together and that all the items must go to collections that are open to the public.

Although the issues may appear straightforward enough, the matter of deaccessioning is very sensitive. Indeed, one of the members of the Harvard Corporation hung up on *Science* once he heard the topic of inquiry. A critic of the proposed sale explains that it is easy to see any sale as "a moral betrayal of trust" toward the donor—"How much are you going to create the feeling that if you give something to Harvard, when is it going to turn up on the art market or the antiquities market?" Lamberg-Kar-

# Briefing

## Clock Runs Out on Department of Education

President Carter's proposal to create a separate Department of Education was caught in the legislative logjam of mid-October when Congress adjourned to go campaigning. A major balk to the bill was the opposition of a small group of House members who are convinced that establishment of a new department would increase federal intrusion into local education matters. This group threatened to delay action on other priority measures if the reorganization was pressed.

At least deferred was the question of the transfer of the science directorate of the National Science Foundation to the putative new department. The Senate had passed a bill that included the directorate in the new department. A reorganization measure, which had been reported to the House but was not acted on before time ran out, did not make the transfer.

Supporters and opponents of the department expect the Administration to renew efforts to win approval for the change in the next Congress. Vice President Mondale, in fact, reportedly has pledged that the bill will be enacted by the end of the 96th Congress which begins in January.

Carter committed himself to creating a separate education department during his campaign for the presidency. He put the reorganization on his legislative shopping list and kept it there during the latter weeks of the session, even sending out a letter urging adoption in the last days before adjournment. However, the reorganization measure never rated a priority comparable to that assigned to the energy bill and other major legislation. And when time became a crucial factor and House leadership faced the threat of obstruction on the issue, the measure was sidetracked.

Opposition came from a relatively small bipartisan group of House members. Most objected on dual grounds—arguing that it would increase costs and expand the bureaucracy unnecessarily as well as pose the likelihood of greater federal intervention. Conspicuous among the opponents were John N. Erlenborn (R–Ill.), David R. Obey (D–Wis.), Leo J. Ryan (D–Cal.), and Robert S. Walker (R–Pa.).

The federal control issue became the dominant one in the House so that there was no effective test of sentiment on the question of incorporation of the NSF science education component in a new department. An attempt was made on the floor of the Senate by Senator Harrison H. Schmitt (R–N.M.) to block the transfer, but it was roundly defeated and it is generally agreed that the effort was poorly engineered. Observers now seem to agree that it is simply not clear whether the transfer would have emerged intact from a House-Senate conference to reconcile differences in the two versions.

The opponents, however, do agree that if it had been brought to a vote in October, the bill creating a Department of Education would have passed the House. The outcome next time would appear to depend on where on its priority list the Administration puts the measure, and also on whether, as some opponents believe, opposition is building up. And they like to think another Fabian victory is possible, perhaps again won by parliamentary delay and the clock.

## Resources for the Future Eschews Brookings Merger

Resources for the Future has backed away from a mooted merger with the Brookings Institution. The RFF board voted on 21 October "to do everything possible" to maintain the Washington-based resource and environmental research organization as an independent entity.

RFF will be able to go it alone if it succeeds in raising about $7 million in endowment and general support funds. The Ford Foundation, which established RFF a quarter century ago and has been its principal source of support since then, is expected to match these funds for a total $14 million. Ford had been a party to the discussions of an RFF-Brookings merger (*Science*, 7 July), and it can be assumed that the recent RFF board decision had Ford backing. RFF has set a deadline of next March in its fund raising. Pledges for about half the needed $7 million are apparently in hand and RFF officials and staff are optimistic that the balance will


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lovsky hinted darkly that the question of selling paintings was only the "tip of the iceberg." He added that it would have been possible to conduct negotiations secretly, as is usually done, and said, "I'm not sure whether I made a mistake" in letting it be public—"the more the fuss, the cloudier the issues get." He said Sturtevant's criticisms were misinformed, but also volunteered that Sturtevant had done the museum a service because his agitations had helped the sorry plight of the museum to become known at the highest levels of the university administration.

If the paintings are sold, says Lamberg-Karlovsky, "whether the decision is right or wrong we'll only know years from now." The prices, too, would be a gamble. Prices for archeological items have been skyrocketing as they have entered the fine arts market. A carved wooden mask, for instance, that would have sold for a few hundred dollars in the 1950's, is now worth $50,000. Prices for paintings by American artists have also been spiraling now that works by the old European masters have become literally priceless. A few months ago an art dealer paid $980,000 for a Bingham painting, *The Jolly Flatboatman*. If the Peabody waited a couple of years, the estimated value of the paintings in question might soar.

Museums try to maintain a low profile in their trading activities, but occasionally scandal erupts. The director of the Heye Foundation, owner of New York's Museum of the American Indian, was sacked a few years ago for some highly irregular deaccessioning. The Brooklyn Museum is currently under investigation by the state district attorney for sales of archeological items at paltry sums to friends of the museum. And the Metropolitan Museum of Art's former director Thomas Hoving created a major scandal some years ago by selling a collection of French Impressionist paintings—against the advice of his curators—to pay for $5 million Velasquez. Thus, as Williams says, the general issue of deaccessioning "is *not* an academic question."

It may not seem so important to the rest of the world, but at Harvard the situation is pressing and the decisions agonizing. With the big fund drive coming up, it is imperative to avoid the slightest appearance of cavalier actions. And the university's reputation as a whole is involved. As Sturtevant says, "If you can't trust Harvard, who can you trust?"—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

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be obtained by the March deadline.

After the board meeting, RFF president Charles Hitch said that, although a decision had been made not to merge with Brookings, the board was encouraging closer RFF collaboration with the economic and social policy research organization. The board also named a successor to Hitch, who has announced he will retire next summer. The successor is Emery N. Castle, now RFF vice president and senior fellow.

RFF is currently in the process of cutting back its research staff because of financial pressures. The staff had approximately doubled to about 120 in the past 3 years and the aim is to return to the 1975 level. According to RFF officials the retrenchment would have occurred whichever way the merger decision went.

## Chinese Scientists Seem Actuated by New Pragmatism

China watchers detect a change in attitude or at least in tactics affecting participation in international scientific activities by China and Taiwan. Both sides have followed a policy of boycotting scientific meetings and organizations in which the other is involved. The conflict is generated by the claim of each to represent all of China (*Science*, 5 November 1976).

An apparent break with this practice occurred when scientists from both countries attended the International Conference on High Energy Physics held in Tokyo from 24 to 30 August. The initiative appeared to lie with scientists from the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), who had earlier avoided such meetings. Chinese scientists apparently attended a meeting on sensors in Manila under similar conditions some months earlier. Subsequent to the Tokyo meeting, confirmation that Peking had dropped its boycott was reported, coming from a New China News Agency official in Hong Kong.

Sinologists in this country see the development as consistent with China's ambitious campaign to modernize its science and technology. American scientists who have encountered scientists from the PRC at international meetings say that in recent months the Chinese have appeared more "relaxed" than at earlier meetings and have seemed anxious to discuss scientific work in which they are interested and to inquire about acquiring American scientific instruments. On the question of Taiwan, the impression is that the Chinese have decided to adopt a more "pragmatic" approach.

Evidence of this new pragmatism may be found in the Chinese decision to join the International Union of Crystallography (IUCr) at the union's meeting in Warsaw in August. Because no Taiwanese scientists held official membership in the union the issue of exclusive membership did not arise for the Chinese. However, it was regarded as significant that, in joining the union, the Chinese agreed to adhere to the "principle of the Universality of Science" espoused by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) to which ICUr belongs. The import of the principle is that no community of scientists will be excluded from membership and adherence presumably means that China is willing to tolerate members from Taiwan should they join.

An element of tea-leaf reading remains in any interpretation or prediction of Chinese actions, but enough signs are around for even the more cautious China watchers to be saying that they would not be surprised by change. U.S. government officials in the delegation to China headed by presidential science adviser Frank Press, in July, for example, noted that virtually nothing was said by their hosts about the Taiwanese when previously the Chinese have been vocal on the issue. The change was viewed as significant even if it was dog-that-did-not-bark-in-the-night sort of evidence.

A test of attitudes should occur when students sent by Peking begin to enroll in American universities where there are also students from Taiwan. The Nationalist government in Taiwan so far has made no comment on the matter, but President Chiang Ching-kuo pledged when he was inaugurated that his government would follow a policy of no contact with Peking. Rigorous adherence to that policy could mean a virtual withdrawal from international scientific and educational involvement. As for China, U.S. observers feel that there may be some terminological disputes over characterization of the students' countries but that China is unlikely to make a major issue of the matter.

—John Walsh