

be foolhardy to restrict such research largely on the basis of imagined risks." Lewis Thomas, president of the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, resigned from FOE's advisory council in 1977, as he explained in a recent letter to the general counsel of Health, Education, and Welfare, "because of the civil action suit against HEW then proposed" by FOE. (The FOE filed a brief in New York challenging the legality of DNA research which is not accompanied by a full environmental impact statement.) "I am in

flat disagreement on straightforward scientific grounds with the rigid position taken by their organization," Thomas wrote.

Joshua Lederberg, president of Rockefeller University and trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), wrote to HEW to disassociate himself from the position taken by the NRDC. René Dubos, a trustee of the NRDC, was angry because his name appeared on the letterhead along with NRDC's comments on research guide-

lines being proposed by the government. He wrote to the director of NIH on 30 October: "You may have assumed that I had been consulted about the preparation of this document and that I am in favor of its recommendations. But this is not the case. I had no idea that NRDC was involved in the recombinant DNA problem, for which it has no competence. . . . Failure on the part of NRDC to communicate with me . . . reveals either an irresponsible lack of familiarity with the literature in this field, or in-

Briefing

UC Debate on Weapons Labs May Be Nearing Conclusions

The University of California's executive suite is the source of a new proposal aimed at settling the long-running debate over the university's management of the Livermore and Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratories. UC vice-president William Fretter has recommended to university president David S. Saxon that he appoint a committee to provide an improved "two-way flow of communication" between the university and the labs.

The relationship between the university and the laboratories has come under criticism during the last decade as some faculty, students, and outside activists questioned the appropriateness of the university's tie with the labs which, in the case of Los Alamos, dates back to 1943. The critics have been divided between those who urged that UC sever ties with the labs and others who argued that the university should exercise stronger management (*Science*, 31 March).

Fretter, a former chairman of the Berkeley physics department, took over as vice-president at midyear. Saxon at the time assigned him the task of considering the university-labs relationship from all perspectives including that of a university-wide committee on the subject headed by former UCLA vice-chancellor William Gerberding. The Gerberding committee in its report last February also recommended that UC retain ties with the laboratories, but only on condition that the university assume a more active management role.

A major difference between the two sets of recommendations is that the Gerberding group proposed a board of overseers, including UC regents among its

members, who would be expected to have security clearances in order to monitor both weapons programs and civilian energy research at the labs. Fretter recommends a committee appointed by the UC president which would not be linked to the regents and not have security clearance. As a consequence, such a committee would be free to hold hearings inside and outside the labs and to make public reports to the university president.

Fretter's proposal has already drawn criticism. The Livermore staff union, the Society of Professional Scientists and Engineers, has said it represents a "dilution" of the Gerberding recommendations. The UC Nuclear Labs Conversion Project, a coalition of groups and individuals opposed to nuclear arms, and Berkeley student groups have objected to Fretter's recommendations as weaker than the Gerberding group's. The critics are also pushing Fretter to change an 8 January hearing to gather comment on his proposal to an open public hearing involving the regents.

Fretter so far has made his proposal only in oral form at a meeting of the regents' special research projects committee on 17 November. He is expected to provide a written version this month. The Berkeley faculty's academic senate in late November was set to vote on a committee proposal urging that the university sever its links with the labs. After debate, however, the senate voted to table the measure until its members were able to study the Fretter recommendations.

Conversion project spokesmen complain that attempts in recent months to conduct open forums or debates at Livermore have been rejected. They say that the organization's efforts to obtain information on weapons programs at the labs have also been rebuffed, and they have been told that social and political analy-

ses as well as technical information on the projects are classified. They say this leads them to doubt the credibility of any monitoring group which lacks security clearance, as would the committee Fretter proposes.

At this point, indications are that the UC administration is persuaded that continuation of the UC management role is in the public interest and it is seeking an acceptable formula for maintaining the tie. The critics, on the other hand, appear more skeptical that UC management will be effectively bolstered, and now seem to be leaning more strongly toward advocating termination.

Bishops Rescind Job Cut but Two Leave Values Panel

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has affirmed its support of its committee on human values through which it keeps in touch with developments in science, but has done so only after some backing and filling which resulted in the resignation of the committee's two staff members.

Elimination of the two staff positions was proposed in September, by the panel which serves as the executive committee of the conference, as part of a reduction in programs and personnel intended to avoid a 1979 deficit. Among the jobs affected were those of Sister Ann Neale, executive director of the human values committee, and Kathryn Rucker, research associate. Also included in the projected cuts was support for services of activist priest Msgr. George Higgins. Reaction to these cuts—particularly objections by organized labor to actions affecting Higgins—were very sharp.

tellectual dishonesty in using my name for a cause that I regard as ridiculous." He ended by saying that he would resign from the board of NRDC forthwith.

Dubos could not be reached for comment, but John Adams, the executive director of NRDC, said the letter of resignation had been withdrawn. "It was quite unfortunate . . . an unpleasant experience for all of us." Adams said that the NRDC is trying to patch up its relations with the scientific community. He expected that the split—which he

claimed was the result of poor communication more than substantive error—would soon be mended.

The campaign to bring the environmentalists to heel, which bears the marks of an organized effort, has had an impact. Adams said the NRDC is reconsidering its DNA policy. He and his colleagues are trying to decide whether it makes sense to continue lobbying for tighter control of this research without the backing of NRDC's most respected scientists. "Is this an issue for which

there is no technical support?" Adams asked. "Without the scientific support in the field, we see ourselves with a difficult row to hoe. . . . When there is a split the way there is now, we have to be prepared to reassess." He was stung by the recent criticism from the scientists, whom he said had abandoned a cause they themselves created: "They are the ones who left. I blame them. We haven't changed our policy."

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), another group active in this area,

Briefing

A reversal was ordered in mid-November by the administrative committee that serves as board of directors of the conference. Higgins has said he will remain at the conference until his scheduled retirement in 1980. Neal and Rucker, who had been put on notice in September, decided to carry through with plans to leave the conference. Neale plans to teach ethics part-time at Catholic University in Washington. She is a member of HEW Secretary Joseph Califano's committee on the rights and responsibilities of women and expects to be more actively engaged in the work of that committee.

Neale was appointed the first executive director of the human values committee in 1975. The committee's major function is to monitor scientific developments and keep the bishops informed on those likely to raise ethical or doctrinal issues. The committee, for example, drafted a statement on recombinant DNA research which was approved by the conference's governing board (*Science*, 10 June 1977). During the past year it has concentrated on exploring the ethical aspects of energy policy. Small conferences involving philosophers, theologians, scientists, and engineers had been held, and there were plans to broaden the scope of the effort.

Neale declines to discuss her reasons for leaving the secretariat. In a statement made in leaving the conference she said "I rejoice in the recent decision to continue the Secretariat for Human Values because it reaffirms the Church's commitment to dialogue and liaison with the scientific community," and she offered "all possible assistance" in the transition.

Conference officials say that the search is on for new permanent staff and that the bishops remain firmly behind the human values committee, which continues to be one of the few efforts going to relate theology and technology.

Association Row Keeps a Touch of Class

Along the stretch of Massachusetts Avenue known as "association row" because of the concentration of nonprofit organizations in the neighborhood, big, boxlike office buildings are displacing the hodgepodge of buildings of widely varying style and scale put up in the early part of the century. The stateliest survivor has been a five-story building in beaux arts style at 1785 Mass Avenue. Constructed in the teens as a luxury apartment, it is familiarly known as the Mellon building for Andrew Mellon, the tycoon and philanthropist who occupied the fifth-floor apartment there in the 1920's and 1930's. Since World War II, 1785 has housed offices rather than the social elite. During the 1960's, most of the building was occupied by the American Council on Education before the ACE left for the hive of higher education activity in the new office building devoted to that purpose across Dupont Circle. Although 1785 has been a sentimental favorite, other potential occupants among the nonprofits, including the AAAS, have been put off by the problems of satisfactory conversion posed by the building's high ceilings, thick walls, and general design for gracious living. Fears were growing that the developers would take over and the wreckers soon move in. Such a fate, however, has been averted by the action, appropriately enough, of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which bought the building and is renovating it for a headquarters.

The trust is a private, nonprofit organization which accepts custody of nationally significant properties with adequate endowments. It owns, for example, the

Stephen Decatur and Woodrow Wilson houses in Washington. The trust bought 1785 from the Brookings Institution next door for \$1.3 million of its own funds. Renovation is expected to cost \$2.5 million in all; half is being raised through a \$1.25 million fund appeal and the other half is to come from a federal matching grant under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Trust officials say that the proceeds of the fund campaign have passed the \$1 million mark with a \$250,000 grant from the Kellogg founda-



tion topping contributions by private foundations, corporations, and individuals.

The renovation is scheduled to be completed by summer 1979. The building's original floor plan will be followed and as much interior detail as possible restored. Air-conditioning equipment will be sequestered in the rear walls of the building so as not to mar the elegant line of the mansard roof. The trust will occupy the bottom three floors and the top two floors, including Mellon's long-term Washington pied-à-terre, will be leased, presumably to suitably nonprofit tenants.

John Walsh