

and personnel must be resisted; ISTC would fare best if it started small and built slowly.

This emphasis on independence generates the demand that ISTC have a strong governing board. As envisioned, the board would exercise authority over programs as well as act as arbiter of policy. It, rather than the ISTC director, would have ultimate power, at least formally, to run the agency. Such a board, made up of mostly distinguished outsiders, is seen as a guarantor that ISTC would not be bullied in the bureaucracy. The model often cited is the National Science Board, which is the policy body of the

National Science Foundation (NSF).

As discussions reached the hearings stage in Congress, a prominent spokesman for the view that ISTC should be an independent agency with a strong board has been H. Guyford Stever, former director of the NSF and President's science adviser. Stever says his own experience in government made him conclude that "you need the drive of a [strong] board to carry you through" in a venture concerned with long-term results as ISTC is, because "everyday pressures" are exerted to deal with short-term problems. A strong board "also helps you assure quality in your own organization,"

says Stever. In respect to making ISTC a free-standing agency Stever recently has modified his views, acknowledging that there could be some merit in ISTC's operating in a new aid structure.

The Administration, starting with roughly the same premises about the need for ISTC, evolved a design for an institute with differing governance arrangements. This design resulted from work which began before President Carter publicly espoused the idea in a speech in Caracas in March 1978. The President's science adviser, Frank Press, had been a strong advocate of the institute idea and successfully commended it to the President. Press had been in touch with the group responsible for the Seitz letter and shared many of its views. Early staff work on the institute was carried on within Press's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) under the guidance of Eugene Skolnikoff, an MIT political scientist with expertise in international scientific affairs. An old Washington hand, Skolnikoff has been assisting Press part time on projects for the White House. By summer, Press established a planning office for the institute under Ralph Smuckler, dean of international studies programs at Michigan State. And subsequently, an OSTP advisory committee on the institute was set up under the chairmanship of David Bell, executive vicepresident of the Ford Foundation and a former director of AID, and with several members with links to the Council on Science and Technology for Development.

The Administration blueprint puts the institute within the proposed International Development Cooperation Administration (IDCA), which would replace AID under a reorganization plan submitted to Congress on 11 April. White House planners have styled the policy-making body for ISTC the Council on International Scientific and Technological Cooperation which would stand in an advisory relationship to the director of the institute.

The concept of an advisory council rather than a governing board for ISTC has ignited the critics. However, Administration planners emphasize that it is essential that the institute have the capacity to coordinate development of R & D activities in government mission agencies effectively. A free-standing institute might find itself isolated in a way that would prevent it from playing a successful coordinating role. And a governing board which might exercise supererogatory powers could well increase that isolation. There is the danger also, that a strong governing board could ham-

Approval Sought for Nitrite Plan

Acting after a protracted internal dispute, the Carter Administration has asked Congress to sanction its plan to phase out the use of nitrite as a food additive. The plan, which was announced last fall after the disclosure of new evidence that nitrite is a carcinogen (*Science*, 8 September 1978), would permit a phaseout as soon as comparable preservatives become available, perhaps within 3 years.

If Congress approves the plan, it would cover nitrite-cured meats, fish, and poultry that together account for roughly 7 percent of the U.S. food supply. The approval would take the form of an amendment to current food laws, which require that an additive be immediately banned if it is established as a carcinogen.

The Administration rejected such a ban because of nitrite's significant benefit, namely that it retards the growth of botulism spores in unrefrigerated processed meats. A precipitous ban would be confusing to consumers, the Administration says, and costly to manufacturers, who have no comparable substitutes immediately at hand. Measuring such economic costs is controversial, but a provision permitting economic considerations was included in the Administration proposal at the insistence of the White House and the Council on Wage and Price Stability.

The decision to seek congressional approval for the phaseout was the outcome of a bitter internal fight, which pitted Attorney General Griffin Bell against Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano. Remembering well the consumer outrage over the proposed saccharin ban, Califano decided shrewdly last fall to spread the responsibility for a nitrite phaseout around the Administration. He asked Bell to review the proposal, and presumably, to give it his legal approval.

In a decision reached several months ago, however, Bell decided that the phaseout was not legal. His reading of the food law was that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Agriculture had to fish or cut bait: if nitrite was a carcinogen, it had to be banned right away, under the provisions of either the Delaney clause or a more general provision against additives to food that render it "injurious to health." Califano, sure of both the phaseout proposal and his own legal expertise, met with Bell directly, but it was to no avail. The White House refused to overturn Bell's decision. The result was the request for Congressional approval.

Although Congress is likely to agree to a moratorium on the ban, it may delay it beyond the period of 3 years that the Administration estimates is necessary for the development of reasonable nitrite alternatives. As opposed to the additive saccharin, nitrite has proved benefits, and most observers are predicting that the saccharin moratorium will soon be extended for more than another year. Publicly, FDA officials are optimistic that the nitrite proposal will pass as proposed, but privately they acknowledge that congressional tinkering is likely. —R.J.S.