

Criticism of the UC management role has come most forcefully from San Francisco Bay area peace organizations working through a coalition called the UC Nuclear Weapons Labs Conversion Project. The coalition was formed in 1976 at a time when extension of the UC operating contract for the labs was being negotiated with DOE. Until recently, the Conversion Project's policy had been to advocate that the university continue to manage the labs but should exert much closer administrative control and ensure that the public be better informed on the

labs' programs. In the last few months, the coalition concluded that the university would not provide effective public oversight of the sort it favored and now works for severance of the tie.

In the criticism of the weapons labs study group, the lead has been taken by Berkeley physics professor Charles Schwartz, who has based his objections to the panel's activities primarily on what he claims are violations of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which is designed to ensure public access to the proceedings of committees

that provide advice to federal policy-making officials.

Schwartz has established a reputation as an activist in a succession of campus conflicts since the 1960's. He has a trenchant style of writing and speaking and a knack for interesting the news media in his views. In respect to the study group he has sought to make his case in public hearings and in correspondence with Schlesinger, which up to now has been one-sided. Schwartz had no direct response to his letters until recently when he received a letter from the DOE counsel's office replying to Schwartz's earlier letters to Schlesinger and providing a fuller statement of the agency's legal position on FACA.

Schwartz's fundamental argument against the study group is that members of the panel do not represent a fair range of opinion on the main issues involved as required by FACA, and that therefore the group should be dismissed.

DOE officials point to a ruling from the agency counsel's office that FACA rules do not apply in this case because the study group is not giving advice directly to Schlesinger or his top aides, but rather is performing a fact-finding job for ERAB which in turn will advise Schlesinger and is covered by FACA. In effect the study group is an advisory panel to an advisory panel.

Schwartz argues that members of the study group were picked by Schlesinger and Buchsbaum and not by the committee at large and therefore FACA should apply. (Members of ERAB said in response to questions by *Science* that the board as a whole was not consulted on the membership of the study group and that the composition of the panel was not discussed at the ERAB meeting following Schlesinger's announcement. Schwartz says that the letter he received recently from DOE states that the study group's members were selected by Buchsbaum.) Schwartz goes on to charge that the panel is biased because it is "composed overwhelmingly of persons whose careers have been intimately tied to LLL [Lawrence Livermore Laboratory] and LASL [Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory] and their parent and affiliated organizations." He points out that Buchsbaum is a former vice president of the Sandia Corporation—a Bell subsidiary whose mission is the "weaponization" of nuclear ordnance.

Members of the group include two former weapons lab directors, Harold Agnew who retired on 1 March after long service as LASL director, and Michael May, a former director and now an assistant director at Livermore. Other

## Radiation Responsibilities

A White House task force report released last month says leadership in research on the health effects of radiation should be in the hands of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), not in the Department of Energy (DOE), which is currently responsible for most such research.

The report on "institutional arrangements" discusses how better coordination can be achieved in federal radiation research and in promulgating regulations to protect workers and the general public. It is the sixth and final draft report prepared by the Interagency Task Force on Ionizing Radiation, headed by Peter Libassi, general counsel of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW).

The report notes that federal involvement in radiation-related activities has vastly outstripped the original framework supplied by the old Atomic Energy Commission. As a result, responsibilities are fragmented, overlapping, and uncoordinated.

Now, says the task force, it is time for the government to pull its socks up. First of all, "the lead responsibility for coordinating a radiation health effects research program should be exercised by an agency that specializes in health-related research"—namely, the NIH.

The task force proposes the formation of twin interagency committees, one on research and one on radiation protection. An interagency radiation research committee, chaired by NIH, would set priorities and put together a government-wide research agenda (in collaboration with HEW, which has already been directed by Congress to do just that). The report notes that "tension exists" between the DOE's roles as primary sponsor of research, as developer and promoter of nuclear energy, and as employer of radiation workers. It suggests that more balance could be achieved by raising the radiation research budgets of other agencies and expanding the number of scientists and institutions involved in the research. Alternatively, it suggests transferring some DOE money to NIH and other agencies over the next few years—an idea DOE heartily resists.

As for rules governing human exposure to radiation, the report addresses the much-discussed idea of making the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the lead agency. But it observes that reaction to this is generally negative, mainly because radiation-related programs are too broad and varied. It seems to prefer the idea of an interagency radiation protection committee that might be chaired by the EPA.

As for overall coordination between the two committees, the task force discusses the possibility of setting up a radiation coordinating council modeled along the lines of the old Federal Radiation Council (subsumed by EPA in 1970). Such a body could resolve disputes and deal with matters that fall between the cracks, such as radiation-related liability claims.

The comment period for this report is up on 18 May. Then all six reports will be submitted to the White House. In view of the ongoing radiation furor, this is one document that is unlikely to end up moldering in the President's desk drawer.—C.H.