which, like the one at Three Mile Island, were designed by Babcock & Wilcox (B & W) and could experience similar accidents. This has done the nuclear industry's reputation in the financial markets no good. The industry has been shaken only slightly by the immediate cost of the accident; it is more worried about the long-term prospects for federal intervention in the business, more frequent shutdowns, and longer licensing delays. These are anathema to nuclear people, just as miners' strikes are to coal operators.

According to the Edison Electric Institute, the inflationary trends last year were moving in a direction that favored nuclear power. The cost of generating a kilowatt-hour of electricity in 1977 was 1.5¢ with nuclear power, 1.8¢ with coal, and 3.7¢ with oil. In 1978, the corresponding figures were 1.5¢, 2¢, and 4¢. Goldstein of the AIF said that "unless we change the Clean Air Act," the cost of burning coal will escalate faster than the cost of nuclear power. "The public should know," an AIF handout says, "that even after we conserve to the utmost, we have only three real options when it comes to future electric power supplies: coal, nuclear energy, and shortages." William Lee, president of the Duke Power Company, which owns three of the B & W reactors being shut down this spring, used stronger language when trying to persuade the NRC to keep his plants open. He predicted there would be "rotating blackouts" this summer in the eastern United States if his company were forced to close its nuclear plants.

Lee changed this dire forecast after the NRC backed away from the original plan, which would have required an indefinite shutdown for mechanical changes. Instead, the NRC agreed to a compromise requiring that two of Duke Power's reactors be closed for only one weekend each. The third will be closed longer because the company already had scheduled it for an extended period of refueling. "We are going home with a very reasonable solution," Lee said. The apocalypse is no longer on the horizon.

Nevertheless, the NRC's willingness to compel plant shutdowns for the second time in a few months (the earlier case also involved B & W machinery, as reported in *Science*, 30 March) suggests that nuclear power is losing its special claim to efficiency. It is no longer the dependable, nuisance-free resource it once seemed. If it becomes as costly as coal, as it could well do in a few years, it will have lost much of its appeal.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

Senior Scholars Unite

A couple of over-65-year-olds were shaking their heads together a while back over society's habit of shoving people out to pasture when they are still at the height of their creative powers. The tendency is particularly egregious in academia. So the two enterprising oldsters, economists Kenneth Boulding and Lawrence Senesh of the University of Colorado, decided to do something about it. They wrote to about 60 of their brightest and busiest friends to see how many would be interested in setting up an institution that would encourage and make use of the work of retired scholars, scientists, and thinkers.

The response was enthusiastic; a conference was held last January, and the result is a plan for a national Academy of Independent Scholars.

The board of trustees,* including the two originators, has just completed a proposal seeking $300,000 to lay the groundwork for the academy over the next 3 years. Plans are still preliminary, but the basic scheme is to establish regional academies around the country and a national one to coordinate their activities and serve as a liaison with other groups. (Headquarters location has not been decided, but Colorado is not ruled out.)

The purpose of the academy will be threefold. First, it will act as "facilitator"—that is, it will supply support systems to some retired scholars to permit them to continue their work and help others find outside sources of support. Second, it will have a "brokerage" function, bringing together creative people from all sectors with mutual or complementary interests, and, for example, finding retired professors to act as replacements for professors on leave from their institutions. Finally, there is the "programmatic" function. This will embrace task forces, public hearings, symposia, and surveys related to public policy issues and to subjects close to the academy's heart, such as retirement policies and the relationship between creativity and aging. There are plans to publish a journal called *New Ideas*, to tie the network together.

Qualifications for academy membership have not been determined and the board is divided over how exclusive it should be, although everyone agrees membership should not be honorific but should be based on current achievements. "Boulding wants to avoid a mutual admiration society," says Senesh. "This is not for brownie points earned in the past." Most members will be senior thinkers, but the academy will be open to younger people "whose creative interests cut across the lines of conventional institutional arrangements," according to Senesh.

The academy founders want to encourage projects that involve cooperation between younger and older scholars—"intergenerational dyads," as their report puts it. "There is little communication between older and younger generations in academia," Senesh observes.

The academy basically wants to do things that are not done very well at institutions of higher education: promote integrative and interdisciplinary approaches to topics of interest; facilitate the transfer of "frontier" knowledge to the community at large; and pull in people of intellectual accomplishment from outside the world of scholardom.

The response to the academy idea, which Senesh describes as "utterly overwhelming," has brought into stark perspective not only the appalling waste of elderly talent but also the repression of creativity many academics feel at their institutions. "Some people in academia can hardly wait for retirement so they can do creative work," says Senesh, but many find themselves relegated to tending their vegetable gardens instead.

The planning conference, held at Wingspread in Racine, Wisconsin, was subsidized by the University of Colorado, the Exxon Foundation, and the Johnson Foundation. The source of future support no one knows for sure, but the bandwagon is rolling. Sixty persons have been invited to become charter members, and acceptances are rolling in—from Nobel laureate Glenn Seaborg and author and critic Alfred Kazin, to name two. And already, a group of faculty members from a large state university have written to ask for advice in setting up a regional academy.

*Kenneth Boulding and Lawrence Senesh, University of Colorado, Robert A. Aldrich, University of Colorado Medical School; David Easton, University of Chicago; Arthur Goldschmidt, United Nations; Henry Koffler, University of Minnesota; and Berta Scharrer, Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

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Teen-Age Pregnancies Out of Control

Despite a dramatic increase in the use of contraceptives in this country, teen-age pregnancies continue to be a rampant problem, warping millions of lives and costing the federal government billions of dollars a year in subsidies.

Such was the message of the final press conference of the House Select Committee on Population. The committee went out of business on 30 April after a whirlwind year of hearings and reports. The report on fertility and contraception in the United States was the last of five reports covering immigration, population shifts, and world population problems.

Committee chairman James Scheuer (D-N.Y.) and members Anthony Beilenson (D-Calif.) and Paul McCloskey (R-Calif.) made it clear at the press conference that they considered Congress' recent decision to terminate the committee a short-sighted, indeed "tragic" mistake, particularly since population matters are not of central concern in any of the standing committees of Congress.

The committee estimated that there are more than 3 million fertile women in the country who have no access to contraception. More than 2 million of these are sexually active teen-agers. Fully one-third of all girls between 15 and 20 years of age have at least one unwanted pregnancy. Half of the government's money for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) goes to women who had their first child when they were teen-agers (AFDC payments in 1975 totaled $4.65 billion). Very few girls now give their babies up for adoption, in large part because of the weakening social taboo against unwed mothers. Said one congressman: "I fear that our country is paying a desperate price both in terms of family life and in the drain on state and local treasuries" because of the government's unwillingness to make a fuller commitment to birth control programs, sex education, and contraception research.

The Administration has recommended a paltry $10 million increase in family planning services next year: the committee desires a $65 million increase, with $35 million going for pregnancy prevention for teens. At present there is a low level of participation in these programs because of their perceived inaccessibility, teen-agers' worries about confidentiality, and legal obstacles such as requirements for parental consent.

The committee was also very upset about the state of contraception research in this country. Congress recently voted down an appropriation of $35 million to build an in-house research capacity for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the only institute directly involved in contraception research. The congressmen said that in committee hearings medical people had all agreed that to achieve another breakthrough on the scale of the birth control pill, the annual budget for research would have to be increased from the current level of $160 million a year to something like $400 million. They also noted that there had been a decline in activities of pharmaceutical firms in contraceptive research over the past decade—in part because of discouraging Food and Drug Administration regulations—and that only four companies are planning to increase contraception expenditures in 1980.

The congressmen observed that sex bias is an impediment at all levels of the problem—from family planning services, most of which "focus almost exclusively on services for females," to Congress itself, whose vote against continuing the committee, in the words of McCloskey, "probably indicates the need to have more young women in politics."

Justices Ponder Laetrile

The tragicomedy of Laetrile was brought to the marmoreal dignity of the Supreme Court this month. The Court has consented to decide whether to uphold an appeals court injunction issued last July permitting certifiably terminal cancer patients to receive injections of Laetrile under medical supervision.

On 25 April the Supreme Court heard the same tired arguments. The lawyer for the original petitioner, Glenn Rutherford, argued that government "safety and efficacy" provisions do not obtain in the case of terminal cancer patients, that under a 1962 grandfather clause the drug deserved to be "generally recognized as safe," and that government attempts to withhold it were an unconstitutional invasion of privacy. The solicitor general, arguing for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), pointed out that Laetrile was not commercially distributed before 1962 and therefore not eligible under grandfather provisions; that Laetrile is toxic, which nullifies the privacy considerations; and, finally, that federal law says absolutely nothing about exempting terminal patients from provisions designed to protect people from useless drugs.

There is little doubt that the Court will rule in favor of the government, but the ruling is unlikely to quell the Laetrile fervor, which seems to feast on setbacks. The whole furor is a sorry instance of what happens when people lose faith in constituted authority, and no one is looking very good. The FDA has made a fool of itself trying to snatch apricot pits (the source of Laetrile) off the shelves of health food stores, and the pro-Laetrile movement has been exploited by profiteers and right-wing political extremists. Clinical trials on the drug conducted by the government are unlikely to resolve anything, because, in the absence of a cure, what people want is hope, not facts.

A.E., R.B., and P.H.

The giant statue of Albert Einstein was unveiled on 22 April before a heavyweight audience of National Academy of Sciences members in Washington for their 116th annual meeting. Lost in contemplation in a grove of trees on the Academy's lawn, Einstein doesn't look quite as overwhelming as some photographs have made him appear, but the controversy over the artistic merits and the appropriateness of spending $1.4 million on the statue continues unabated.

The monument already has its own graffiti. Next to the scrawl of sculptor Robert Berks on the pants leg, there are inscribed near the great man's cuff the initials of NAS president Philip Handler and his wife, Lucy. This was done, Berks told *Science*, "as an act of love on my part" toward Handler whose ardent fund-raising efforts made it all possible.

Constance Holden