

committees will empower subcommittees and ad hoc groups to do the work they cannot handle. The actual number of outside advisers will increase.

Another reform project that touched ADAMHA, but only slightly, was the campaign to increase the number of minority and female members on advisory committees. Secretary Califano sent out the initial command to raise the percentages in 1977. He let the message sink in,

and then renewed the campaign late in 1978. Sheila Pyres, HEW's committee management officer, began collecting data from all branches of HEW on a quarterly basis last year, tabulating committee membership in the following categories: American Indian or Alaskan, Asian or Pacific islander, black, Hispanic, female, and white. Because of Califano's special interest in this, every agency has made adjustments. The

heads of NIH and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were specifically instructed to do more recruiting of the disadvantaged than they had done in the past. As a result, NIH now requires that every slate of proposed committee members include the name of "at least one highly qualified ethnic minority candidate and at least one highly qualified female." Failing this, the nominator must file a detailed description of the ethnic and sexual composition of the committee and the field of expertise in question, justifying the decision not to nominate a person from one of the under-represented categories. The FDA was found to be so behind schedule in this business that Califano for a time suspended its authority to appoint new committee members. An FDA official said that this caused a long hiatus in the nominating process, which ended only after FDA Commissioner Donald Kennedy and his staff agreed that, at a minimum, they would strive to have committees composed of 10 percent minorities and 20 percent women. FDA reports that the goal has been achieved.

ADAMHA, a staff person said, had to do some juggling to achieve balance on its committees, but found the task relatively easy. On the average, its committees last year were composed of 26 percent minority and 30 percent female members. The new emphasis on sex and ethnicity has had one effect, however. Geographic balance, once an important issue in committee makeup, is now decidedly a frill.

A few members of defunct ADAMHA committees, contacted at random, expressed concern about the disruptions caused by the general overhaul of the review process. One fretted about the "agonies of change" and wondered aloud whether the trauma would be justified by any future improvement in the quality of research. One staffer grumbled about the rigidity of the ethnic and sex guidelines. Another retiring committee member feared that the reviewers, in being segregated from the agency staff, might become preoccupied with their own parochial interests, or might neglect innovative ideas in mental health research. The response from Klerman's office is that program staff will continue to be asked to express their views on occasion and, when they are invited to do so, will be allowed to give their appraisal of individual projects. Questions like these, dealing with the relationship between the review and the program staffs, will not be answered until after the new scheme has been tried for a while.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

Court Reluctantly Upholds EPA on 2,4,5-T Suspension

The emergency suspension of the herbicide 2,4,5-T by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has passed its first test in court—but just barely. A request by a coalition of timber companies, chemical firms, and herbicide applicators that the suspension be lifted was denied on 12 April by federal district judge James Harvey who concluded that EPA had not acted without foundation or made a clear error. But, he said, "The court will frankly concede that it arrives at this decision with great reluctance and would not in its judgment have ordered the emergency suspension." Only because the court is in large part proscribed from substituting its judgment for that of the EPA was the suspension upheld, he said.

Although the EPA has clearly won the initial round, the decision raises questions about whether EPA will be able to convert its suspension of 2,4,5-T into a ban, given the strength of the case it has presented so far. The key to the case is an epidemiological study of women in Oregon, which the industry has bitterly criticized and which the judge also found questionable. The study suggests a link between exposure to a contaminant of 2,4,5-T, TCDD dioxin, and an increased risk of miscarriages (*Science*, 16 March). The judge acknowledged that such a link is indeed suggested, but called the overall evidence inconclusive, and said that various industry criticisms raise serious doubts about it.

As an example, Dow Chemical Company, the principal manufacturer of 2,4,5-T, claims that in EPA's rush to prevent the spring spraying season it overlooked data that tend to minimize the increased risk of miscarriages. The judge characterized most of Dow's objections as "speculative opinion," but clearly left the door ajar for a more systematic factually based challenge. The EPA, in a rearguard action, is revising part of the study in order to compute more carefully the ratio of miscarriages to live births in both the study and control areas.

Meanwhile, another opponent of the ban, the American Farm Bureau Federation, has announced its intention to finance a scientific conference on 2,4,5-T to coincide with hearings in Washington later this summer. The conference chairmen, whose participation was solicited by the federation and by Dow, are Fred Tschirley, a botanist at Michigan State who formerly worked on pesticides at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and T. C. Byerly, who also worked at USDA. They are billing the conference as a science court that will remove partisanship and emotion from the 2,4,5-T debate. Although many of the participants are from USDA—long a bastion of pesticide and herbicide support—Tschirley has also secured the participation of Ken Kamlip, a scientist at the National Wildlife Federation. Kamlip says that Tschirley has bent over backward to obtain a balanced attendance, and that he "has no quarrel with the way it's being set up so far."

Officials of the Environmental Defense Fund, which is bringing suit to support an EPA ban of 2,4,5-T, have a different view of the conference, and are urging environmentalists not to touch it with 10-foot leafy trees.

—R. JEFFREY SMITH