Briefing

Academics and Spies Achieve Détente

After a squabble last year concerning covert ties between academics and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), relations between the university community and the agency are once again chummy. This, at least, is the report from both the CIA and a civil liberties organization monitoring academic and CIA cooperation.

Recently, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) became the tenth university to publish rudimentary guidelines on how professors ought to relate with spooks. But Susan Woods, with the Washington-based Campaign for Political Rights, says that interest in enacting such guidelines has flagged since a year ago. "It looked then like it was beginning to snowball, but we have now hit a stall," she says.

Thus far, only nine schools have set up guidelines of one sort or another: Columbia, Florida State, Ohio State, Swarthmore, Syracuse, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Illinois–Chicago Circle campus, the State University of New York at Binghamton, and Harvard University. The University of Michigan debated the issue, but then decided not to act after CIA director Stansfield Turner sent two letters to faculty members outlining his position. Turner claimed it would be unfair to single out the CIA in recruiting restrictions.

Similar letters sent last year to Harvard president Derek Bok prompted a major squabble between the university and the CIA. Turner said essentially that he would not abide by Harvard guidelines barring covert and informal ties between professors and CIA employees, and also barring preliminary recruiting investigations conducted without the knowledge of the students who might be recruited. Bok, in retaliation, supported a bill in the U.S. Congress setting up such rules under a formal CIA charter (*Science*, 1 September 1978). Last year, the bill died in a Senate committee, and has yet to be reintroduced in the new Congress.

MIT's interim report calls for university faculty to inform their department chairman when conducting research or consulting for the CIA. "We do not think that any member of the MIT community should (knowingly) act as an agent for an intelligence organization," the report also states. Although the principle may be an obvious one, there is value in stating it openly, according to Louis Menand, one of the report's authors. Recently, an MIT faculty member traveling in Western Europe encountered hostility from individuals who thought he was spying for the CIA, Menand says.

Woods says she will be visiting MIT soon, to try to persuade them to adopt their principles as enforceable requirements—something that Menand says is unlikely. (Morton Halperin, director of the Center for National Security Studies, has also been trying to drum up interest at various campuses.) Only a few schools have written them as rules so far.

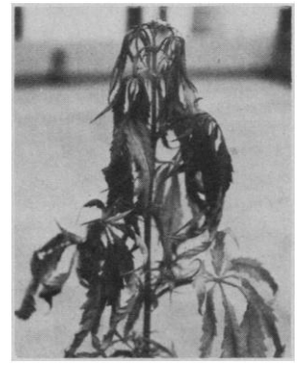
Meanwhile, the CIA seems pleased with the way things are turning out. "We've had an excellent response in our on-campus recruiting," says a spokesperson. "And our analysts attending academic meetings have been treated very well."

Joint Statement Issued by CDC, HEW, NIEHS

Poisoned pot is once again a burning issue in high places. In accordance with a special law passed by Congress last year, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano has once again concluded that paraquat-contaminated marihuana poses health risks for American dope-smokers.

Califano's conclusion is tentative, and subject to advice from the Secretary of Agriculture and the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Califano made the same determination last spring (*Science*, 28 April 1978). But his conclusion then raised a political and scientific ruckus, with the result that further study was called for all around. The State Department in particular was displeased, because it pays for the spraying program that contaminates the pot with the herbicide, paraquat, before it crosses the border from Mexico for consumption here.

This time, Califano had the Center for Disease Control and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences back him up. Studies by the CDC show that roughly 3.6 percent of the marihuana smoked in the United States is contaminated with herbicide (12 percent in the Southwest). "Based on computer simulation studies," the two scientific agencies determined that 50 to 100 smokers in the Southwest are exposed to more than 500



micrograms of paraquat a year—a level capable of causing serious lung damage, according to the CDC. Roughly 2000 additional smokers experience less severe lung damage through lesser exposure. Strangely, the government arrived at these figures, which it called conservative, by calculating that these people purchase one large supply of marihuana each year.

Assuming that Califano ultimately reaches the same conclusion he has now made twice, the State Department will be forced by law to either cease its support for the spraying program, or apply a marker of some kind that identifies the pot as contaminated. The State Department is experimenting with such a marker now. It is made from orange peels and, according to the Washington *Post*, is "variously described by government officials as smelling like 'essence of skunk,' 'burning tar,' and 'poo-poo.' "

Representative Lester Wolff (D–N.Y.), who is chairman of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and who is a strong supporter of the marihuana eradication program, says that Califano is wrong about the hazards of paraquat-contaminated marihuana. At recent hearings, Wolff presented a representative of the company that makes paraquat, and a consultant from the MITRE Corporation, which has worked for the State Department on a paraquat study. Both gave predictable testimony.

0036-8075/79/0720-0282$00.50/0

Air Is Once Again Rent by Drug Lag Claims

After wading for nearly 2 years through the swamp of conflicting theories about whether a "drug lag" exists in the United States, the General Accounting Office has concluded what most people knew to begin with: regulators in the United States do indeed take longer than their overseas counterparts to approve a new drug. The result is that some new therapeutics have been available in foreign countries before the United States.

The GAO was able to come up with only a few examples, including a drug used to treat hypertension (prasozin hydrochloride) and one used to treat duodenal ulcers (cimetidine). Each was available overseas before they were made available to patients in the United States. The GAO showed that other drugs were also made available overseas first, but in most cases, the delay was due to the reluctance of manufacturers to seek approval in the United States until much later than approval had been sought in Europe. Pharmaceutical firms claim their reluctance is prompted by the FDA's inordinate delay—thereby creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The GAO did find that the FDA regularly exceeded its statutory limit for review of a new drug (6 months), frequently by as much as 14 extra months. Most of the European nations studied required between 8 and 13 months, but then many of them have less stringent drug regulation laws.

During recent congressional hearings on the GAO report, former FDA Commissioner Donald Kennedy said the question the Congress ought to address is whether the FDA is taking too long, given the law it has to work with. The GAO answered this in part: FDA delays its reviews by changing reviewers in midstream, by failing to use a computerized information system, by writing vague guidelines, and by failing to provide feedback swiftly to interested companies. The industry, on the other hand, often fails to submit correctly completed new drug applications, or to correct swiftly the deficiencies FDA detects, the GAO says. What all this will contribute to a debate that has gone on for years and years is unclear.

R. Jeffrey Smith

(Continued from page 281)

"fix up the image" of science. He suggested that the image conveyed to the public may be exactly correct, but that the number of people who dislike what they see in it may be growing. Holton referred to them as "the Dionysians," after the Greek nature-worshiping cult. Unlike the reason-worshiping Apollonians, he said, they revere instinct, emotion, and primitiveness. Holton thought more could be accomplished by studying the Dionysians than by polishing the image of science.

Most of those present seemed to think the press had exaggerated the radiation hazards at Three Mile Island and scared the public unduly. This led to a general lament over the inability of news people to understand or convey the subtleties of scientific debate. Joseph Nye, Jr., Harvard professor of government, said that reporters tend to search out opposite poles of opinion and then balance one extreme against another to create an artificial form of objectivity. In this way, he said, the middle ground is left undefended and ignored. There ought to be a troubleshooting institution of some sort, Nye and Doty said, that could sweep in and set up shop on short notice. It would fill the ignorance gap with unbiased information not collected to support any preordained political or mercenary objective. The National Academy of Sciences is not equipped to provide that sort of service, Nye and Doty said, because it requires months simply to assemble the volunteer experts.

Jeremy Stone, director of the Federation of American Scientists, proposed that funds be collected to support a full-time professional organization in Washington, D.C., whose staff would be available to work on complex policy issues as they arose. People nodded, but nothing was agreed on.

Roszak, author of *Where the Wasteland Ends*, said in a separate interview that "as scientists get called in to testify on these technical matters, they get tarred with the failures of technology." People have learned that "expertise can be bought," he said, and that we have "government by control of the experts." Technicians often provide sanction for political action, as church officials once did, and they lose public sympathy as a result. His general impression is that in the last 10 years there has been a "greater willingness to question technical competence and political authority than before, but that it often takes the form of a resigned cynicism." The trend would be encouraging if it were producing new ideas and new leaders. But he feared that people might become bogged in a self-pitying cynicism that distrusts all leadership.

NAS president Handler said that he resented attempts to "smear" science and scientists with the engineering disasters of 1979. The average citizen understands the difference between science and applied science, he said. "Don't use S-and-T [for science and technology] as though they were one word," he pleaded. There has been little change in public attitudes about research, Handler believes, but he said there has been a significant increase in the number of people who harbor doubts about its applications.

Alexander Morin, director of the National Science Foundation's office of science and society, said there has been "an enormous shift in the relationship of science and technology to authority; they are now an instrument of state power." If you do not like the authority structure, you do not like the people who are working for it, he added. People say, "I want to be involved in the technical decisions that affect my life, and I don't trust the scientists who are speaking for the people I don't trust," However, Morin detected no fundamental distrust of science or technology.

People have learned that "expertise can be bought," Roszak said, and that we have "government by control of the experts."

"The scientific community has shown some signs of running for cover" in the wake of the Three Mile Island accident, Alan McGowan said. "No one's saying it publicly, but there's some sentiment that these scientific disputes should not be aired in public." McGowan was disturbed by articles in *Time*, the *New York Times*, and the Washington *Post* "attempting to discredit or saying everybody else was trying to discredit the scientific community." He had seen no opinion polls demonstrating a loss in public confidence, but he feared that people might lose faith if they were told often enough that they had, or if scientists unilaterally withdrew from the public arena.

Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell said