

the physics institute as a less than optimum way to spend NSF funds.

The real issue, Slichter said, is whether the mathematics community wants an institute even though it would cause a shrinkage in support for mathematics research. Despite what many mathematicians had been led to believe, no new money could be promised for an institute; furthermore, in funding an institute, the NSF would have to pay administrative and secretarial costs that normally are picked up by universities. So the total funds available to support research will decrease, even if the NSF mathematics budget remains the same.

Taken aback by Slichter's questions, the NSF staff contradicted itself several times in trying to justify the institute. First it said, yes, the mathematicians wanted the institute. Then it said that it was not sure the mathematicians wanted the institute, but if they did not want it they would not send in good proposals for institute projects. Slichter pointed out that calling for proposals is no way to find out what the mathematicians want. Mathematics departments will send in proposals even if they think the institute is a bad idea, reasoning that if the NSF is committed to spending money on an institute, they may as well apply for it. Finally, the NSF staff changed its tune again, saying that sometimes you have to do things for a scientific discipline's own good, even if the scientific community would vote against the project.

The board members then asked MacLane to explain what the mathematics community thought of the institute. He replied at length, describing the various ways the mathematics community's opinion had been solicited. In conclusion, he said, "So it is my view that the mathematics community, never being one to have unanimity about anything . . . is not wholly unanimous about this."

The board decided to allow the NSF to solicit proposals, with the proviso that it be made clear that the agency is not committing itself to funding an institute. When word of what transpired at the board meeting reached the mathematics community, a number of the institute's opponents were outraged. They were particularly upset, they said, because they had thought the institute would bring in new money. "We'd been misled," says Elias Stein of Princeton University.

As last summer wore on, the mathematics society decided to take formal actions to slow the NSF down in its apparent rush to fund an institute. The AMS Council voted overwhelmingly for a res-

Environmentalists Chide Carter

Environmental groups see in President Carter's proposed new energy supply mobilization policies a "centralization of power in the hands of a few" that threatens people's rights as well as their environment. These policies were condemned in such strong language at a news conference held by environmental leaders on 20 July that some reporters were left wondering if the environmental community might not be nearing a political break with Jimmy Carter, whom environmentalists generally supported in 1976.

At the news conference, Brock Evans, head of the Sierra Club's Washington office, presented a statement for 11 groups that included nearly all of the major national environmental organizations, plus the League of Women Voters. "We are here to warn you that the President's plan would if implemented pose the strongest kind of threat to the laws now protecting the rights of the public," Evans said.

Another speaker, Richard Ayres, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, was more specific. He said that the President's proposal to establish an Energy Mobilization Board and an Energy Security Corporation were "the most extraordinary authoritarian measures."

Ayres said, in particular, that these bodies would be exempt from the Administrative Procedures Act, which requires the holding of hearings and the basing of decisions on the information presented. Also, the Freedom of Information Act, a statute intended to curb government secrecy, would not, he said, apply to these agencies.

According to Ayres, "fast-track licensing" would eliminate open debate on massive energy projects and "place great power in the hands of three people in Washington," that is, in the hands of members of the Energy Mobilization Board. What Carter was trying to do, he said, was "remove energy from the normal political process" and leave the decisions to himself and his appointees. A nation that has so recently experienced the Vietnam war, he said, "should worry about trying to resolve conflicts outside the political process."

When reporters asked the environmental leaders whether they were breaking politically with the Carter Administration, their replies were ambiguous but seemed to suggest that, while this has not happened yet, things may be tending that way.

Ayres said that Carter was putting "very serious pressure" on his ties with environmentalists, adding, "If the President passes this [mobilization package], he will be remembered for his destruction of the environment."

Rafe Pomerance of Friends of the Earth said: "I think we have been the President's most consistent supporters, yet we have gotten the worst possible option for [dealing with] the energy problem." Later, Ayres said that the President, in his television address on Sunday 15 July, did not acknowledge that there was an alternative path, along which energy conservation and development of renewable energy resources are emphasized.

Garry Deloss of the Environmental Policy Center described a set of energy conservation policies which the environmental groups saw as preferable in every way—economically, environmentally, and politically—to the proposed energy supply mobilization. These included a proposal for a program of "house doctors" who would analyze and correct heat losses from existing buildings.

A reporter asked why, in the environmentalists' opinion, had the President gone so far astray?

"He got some bad advice," Ayres replied. Brock Evans added that, as best they could tell, the only environmentalist among the scores of individuals invited to Camp David recently was Russell Peterson, formerly chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality and now president of the National Audubon Society, one of the groups that had joined in the statement condemning the President's new policies. Some other environmental leaders went to Camp David uninvited but had to leave their statement for the President at the gate, which was as far as they got, he said.

"The advice he is getting is that it's good politics to run over the environmentalists," Evans said.—LUTHER J. CARTER