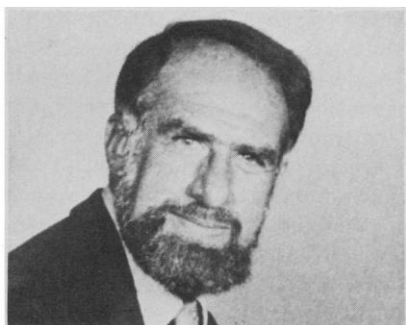


National Lab Head Quits, Citing Apathy by DOE

Unhappiness with the Department of Energy's (DOE) apparent lack of interest in technical expertise is one reason cited by Andrew M. Sessler in his decision to resign as director of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.



Under Sessler's leadership during the last 6 years the laboratory has diversified to the point where only half its activity is devoted to high-energy physics and the rest to applied research and energy research. As a national laboratory of high competence, it might be expected that the DOE would frequently draw upon its technical expertise in framing national energy policy. But according to Sessler, this has not been the case during the last 2 years.

Sessler's primary reason for resigning was a personal decision to return to science. But his frustration with the DOE's apathy was a contributory factor. In a 10 September letter of resignation to University of California president David Saxon, Sessler observes that the focus of interaction between his laboratory and the department had been on procedural and other matters, "rather than on a mutually supportive exploration of the ways this excellent institution can be more fully utilized to work on the nation's critical energy problems. Increasingly, this distortion of priorities has been demoralizing to me."

Sessler explained in an interview that, since the creation of DOE 2 years ago, the national laboratories have been drawn very little into the making of national policy. Under the department's two predecessor agencies, ERDA and the AEC, the labs were more in the center of things.

DOE has shown little interest in

what the laboratories are doing, Sessler says. "Our meetings with the department, when we have them, which is rare, have been devoted to bureaucratic matters, with almost no discussion of program or content." Sessler has also been frustrated at the difficulty of communicating with the department about technical matters: "There are pitifully few technical people at high level in the department, and the program managers, who are technically competent, are not coupled into the top management." The critical post of assistant secretary for energy technology has been vacant for all but 7 months of the department's 2 years of existence. As for contact with former Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger, Sessler met him only twice, on both occasions at cocktail parties, and at neither of which did any substantive discussion occur. "Schlesinger never sat down with the directors of the national laboratories and asked for input on matters that were of concern to him," Sessler says.

New Science Director at NIH

Robert F. Goldberger is to be the new Deputy Director for Science of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He will be responsible for coordinating NIH's intramural research, a program which employs more than 2000 biological scientists and is the largest of its kind in the world.

Goldberger, who has been a researcher at NIH for 18 years, is chief of the biochemistry laboratory of the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Biology and Diagnosis.

He is not at present contemplating any new initiatives or changes in policy. He views his major task as maintaining the quality of the intramural research program. "That means keeping a good influx of young scientists," Goldberger says.

DeWitt Stetten, the previous NIH Deputy Director for Science, has become senior scientific adviser to the NIH director. In looking for his successor, suggestions were gathered from NIH lab chiefs and section heads. Director Fredrickson decided he had so many good nominations that there was no need to extend the search off-campus.

Airplane Magnate Donates \$500,000 for Psi Research

A half-million-dollar grant for psychical research has been awarded to Washington University, St. Louis, by James S. McDonnell, chairman of the McDonnell Douglas aerospace corporation.

The recipient of the grant is physicist Peter F. Phillips, who has a longstanding interest in parapsychology. McDonnell has supported his work in the field and that of other researchers for several years. Phillips declines to discuss McDonnell's views on the subject, save only to say that McDonnell "has a very deep and serious interest in the field per se, not necessarily in me as such, and he wants to set up an activity in a university."

A press release put out by the university quotes McDonnell to this effect: "Man is approaching the evolutionary point where he is beginning to realize there is a possible merging of matter and mind, and a priority item for current scientific research is the understanding of human consciousness. The exploration of the deep inner space of humankind can challenge intellectually adventurous men and women for generations to come. From these explorations will surely come countless discoveries which in time can make possible human life at higher levels of health, happiness, and creativity."

Inquiries to the McDonnell Foundation, through which the grant is channeled, were referred to a corporate vice president of McDonnell Douglas, who attributed the occasion of the research grant to "Peter's interest in the field and credentials as a physicist."

Phillips plans to continue his physics research as before. The psychical research to be conducted under the 5-year McDonnell grant will be performed by two researchers whom Phillips intends to hire. His major parapsychological interests are in psychokinesis and spontaneous occurrences. The spontaneous occurrences of psychical events are from local cases in St. Louis which Phillips has been studying. The results so far, he says, have been interesting but they have not been definitive enough for publication.

Nicholas Wade