

private property protections. The Carter Administration vigorously defended most of the suits in the lower courts, and won. Watt intends to make the remaining cases moot by eliminating offending provisions in the regulations. There are no current plans to try to get the law itself amended, he says.

To overhaul the surface mining office, Watt has chosen James Harris, an Indiana legislator who was active in state efforts to challenge the federal law in court. Harris's formal nomination has been delayed in the wake of reports that he purchased a large parcel of land at a discount from a surface mining firm, while he was chairman of two state legislative committees on surface mining. Harris was unavailable for comment to *Science*, but the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Harris admits to the purchase, which apparently involved no official wrongdoing. Appointed as assistant director of inspection and enforcement is Steven Griles, a former Virginia mining official, who took an active part in that state's challenge to the constitutionality of the law. Environmentalists say the appointments bolster their complaint that Watt appoints foxes as chicken-house sentries.

The Administration's general plan is to eliminate specific requirements of the regulations—such as orders that roads for hauling coal be dug and graded at a

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## Most oversight inspections have been suspended.

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certain angle, or that mining water runoff be cleansed only by means of a silt pond. New rules published in draft form several weeks ago will permit state authorities to establish enforcement programs "as effective as" the federal requirements but significantly different. Matters such as the density of trees required on reclaimed forest land and the frequency of certain mine inspections could be determined by the state.

The Administration has proposed to scrap a current requirement that mine operators be assessed fixed financial penalties for different violations, thus giving state inspectors more discretionary powers. Galloway claims that "flexibility is being used by the department to

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## No Major Change in OMB View of A-21

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Those who hoped that the Reagan Administration would promptly get the government—in the form of Circular A-21—off the universities' backs were disappointed in an exchange of views between Office of Management and Budget (OMB) officials and those attending a recent meeting of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP). The OMB continues to insist that strict accounting for federal research funds is necessary. On the other hand, the meeting produced the strongest expression of willingness to date by OMB officials to work to remove "misunderstandings" that have resulted in excessively rigid implementation of the A-21 rules on accounting for federal research funds.

Representing OMB were Glenn R. Schleede, executive associate director, and John J. Lordan, chief of the financial management branch who has been OMB anchorman during revision and implementation of A-21, which has been highly unpopular in academe.

James D'Ianni, chairman of the CSSP, says the encounter was "not confrontational." The upshot, in fact, was that OMB accepted a CSSP offer to prepare explanatory material intended to accompany A-21 and help avoid excessively demanding interpretations of the time-and-effort reporting provisions that are the most controversial part of the circular.

Lordan told *Science* this could be helpful since it appears that the revised A-21 is being misinterpreted in some places. Reporting requirements are not intended to make faculty punch time clocks or do hourly reporting, he said, but to give "reasonable approximations." Lordan said there apparently are cases in which university administrators or field auditors are "being too rigid in implementation."

Also discussed were complaints that auditors from the Department of Health and Human Services are unreasonably demanding compared to Defense Department auditors. Lordan acknowledges that such complaints are common, but says that the impression in Washington is that the auditors generally take the same point of view in applying the provisions of A-

21. He said, however, that OMB "will try to work on that."

D'Ianni said that the OMB officials made clear that there is no change in the view that full accountability for research funds is necessary. The CSSP members were satisfied with the results of the meeting, he said, "but of course nothing has changed." The CSSP position has been that time-and-effort reporting provisions should be removed from A-21. Now, says D'Ianni, "we may be able to come up with something satisfactory without insisting on complete elimination."—**John Walsh**

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## Academy Protests Human Life Bill and Budget Cuts

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The National Academy of Sciences stepped into the abortion debate and took issue with the Reagan Administration's budget proposals with two resolutions passed during its annual meeting in April.

One of the resolutions disputes the underlying assumption of the "human life" bill currently under consideration in Congress. The bill, basically an anti-abortion measure, states that "present day scientific evidence indicates a significant likelihood that human life exists from conception." But, says the Academy, "the proposal . . . that the term 'person' shall include 'all human life' has no basis within our scientific understanding." Rather, it says the issue "must remain a matter of moral or religious values." Scientists have expressed concern that the bill would curtail much fertility research (*Science*, 8 May 1981, p. 648).

The other resolution is aimed at shoring up support for the social and behavioral sciences, which have been badly mauled in the proposed Reagan budget. The resolution says behavioral and social sciences are important to advancing the frontiers of basic science, and that proposed cuts "are so large as to endanger the continued vitality and progress of this field of scientific inquiry. . . ." The resolution adds that the least that could be done is to permit the National Science Foundation to decide which of its programs should be cut back to keep within total budget allocations.