

This suggests that Academy members would be willing, if necessary, to see funds for physical and biological sciences cut in order to restore some support for the behavioral and social sciences.—**Constance Holden**

## Federal Science Policy Jobs Still Unfilled

Six months after President Reagan's election, several senior science policy posts in government remain unfilled and one has been abolished. There is consequently much uncertainty about the Administration's policies in some areas, and many programs are stalled as government officials await the appointment of people to key policy-making positions.

The most conspicuous unfilled science post is that of science adviser to the President and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Senior White House officials did not seriously consider any candidate for the job until March, and at one point there was even some doubt about whether the post would be filled at all. After a decision was made to retain a scaled-down version of OSTP, the job of director was offered in late March to General Electric research chief Arthur Bueche.

Bueche, who was telephoned by Reagan himself with the job offer, reluctantly turned it down for personal reasons. Since then, several other candidates have been sounded out, but many of them have said they are not interested. One problem is that people in senior industrial posts are reluctant to take a major cut in salary to serve in a mid-level White House position. Another disincentive is that new conflict-of-interest rules require federal officials to divest themselves of stocks in areas that may come under their purview.

Until a new chief is appointed, OSTP's working arrangements and areas of responsibility remain unclear. Benjamin Huberman, OSTP's acting director, has a joint appointment on the staff of the National Security Council (NSC), and OSTP is consequently involved in studies of interest to the NSC, such as military technology, space, and international scientific matters. But the office will not take on

any major new assignments until a new boss is in place.

The top science policy post in the Department of Commerce, Assistant Secretary for Productivity, Technology, and Innovation, also remains vacant. According to Administration sources, there is a good reason—it is being abolished, and the assistant secretary's responsibilities will be transferred to the Director of the National Bureau of Standards. The Reagan Administration has already proposed the elimination of several innovation programs that were run by the Department of Commerce. The post was held in the Carter Administration by Jordan Baruch, and it was the focal point for developing the innovation program that Carter unveiled in October 1979.

In the Department of Energy (DOE), the senior research position, director of the Office of Energy Research, remains unfilled. But that is not surprising, for only eight people had been named to fill DOE's top 19 posts by the end of April, and only one—Secretary of Energy James B. Edwards—had been confirmed by the Senate.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in similar shape. Candidates have been chosen for only two top positions, Administrator and Deputy Administrator, and neither had been confirmed by the Senate by 4 May. The post of Assistant Administrator for Research and Development is still vacant.

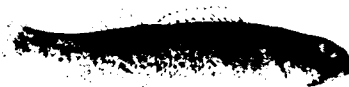
With the recent nomination of James M. Beggs and Hans Mark to be Administrator and Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, heads have been chosen for most of the major federal research agencies. The chief exception is the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). After the former USGS director, William Menard, was ousted on 26 January, the National Academy of Sciences was asked to draw up a list of qualified candidates. It suggested several names to the White House in March, but so far no appointment has been announced.

The delay in filling these science posts is explained by Administration officials as a consequence of a cumbersome review process and difficulties with the new conflict-of-interest rules. An equally important reason is that they have not been accorded high priority.—**Colin Norman**

## Snail Darter's Status Threatened

The snail darter, the tiny fish that became the focus of a mighty battle over the closing of the Tellico Dam, may not be on the verge of extinction after all.

Until recently, the fish's only known habitat was the Little Tennessee River, one of the last free-flowing rivers in Tennessee. Environmentalists were concerned that the snail darter would be wiped out when the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) finished building its dam on the river, and they went to court to block the project. Congress



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Snail darter

eventually allowed the dam to be completed by exempting the project from the Endangered Species Act. In the past few months, however, populations of snail darters have been found in three new places.

David Etnier, the University of Tennessee zoologist who first discovered the fish in 1973, found a few specimens in the Chickamauga Creek near Chattanooga last November, and TVA divers later located several more in a 15-mile stretch of the creek. Etnier found another population last March in the nearby Sequatchie River, and TVA zoologists have located a third population in the Sewee River, a tributary of the Tennessee River.

"There is a slim possibility that these populations may be recent invaders," says Etnier. "If so, the snail darter would be in as bad a shape as ever." But if they turn out to be established populations, the fish may no longer be an endangered species.

Etnier and TVA will conduct more studies during the summer, and if they show that the populations are well established, the snail darter may be reclassified as a "threatened" rather than an endangered species.

These recently discovered populations may have been missed before because they are all in relatively remote locations that can only be reached by boat.—**Colin Norman**