

idence, any regulation of formaldehyde would be premature. It prefers that regulators wait for the results of a \$500,000 NCI survey of the medical records of 17,000 formaldehyde workers. The study, which is just beginning, will not be completed for 2 to 3 years. However, according to one epidemiologist, the NCI study will be limited by the inability to obtain accurate exposure data for each worker. The NCI study coordinator, Aaron Blair, says, however, that the study should provide useful information about the incidence of more common cancers, such as lung or prostatic cancer, among the survey group. The study probably will not be sensitive enough to provide statistically significant data on the incidence of nasal cancer, which is the malignancy that developed in rats tested by industry and NYU.

The Formaldehyde Institute has been energetic and effective in persuading regulatory agencies to reconsider their positions on formaldehyde, even when they appeared to be on the brink of regulating the chemical. One of the Formaldehyde Institute's principal lawyers is John Byington, former head of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Last summer, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration tried to fire one of its top scientists after Byington wrote a letter to the agency complaining about the scientist's statement that formaldehyde is an animal carcinogen. The proposal was dropped after a congressional hearing on the matter. Although OSHA's official position now is that formaldehyde is an animal carcinogen, the agency apparently has no immediate plans to regulate it. The health division of the Consumer Product Safety Commission was to recommend by 6 October whether to ban the use of urea-formaldehyde foam insulation but the report has been postponed until February, in part because the Formaldehyde Institute questioned the quality of exposure data.

The trade group has gotten more than a foot in the door at EPA, where formaldehyde industry representatives met with EPA officials on 19 June, 28 July, and 14 August. According to documents obtained by Moffett's subcommittee, the first meeting with 23 participants included six members of the Formaldehyde Institute and only one scientist among many outside of government who dispute the industry's interpretation of the data. Another outside scientist, who attended at the request of the Formaldehyde Institute, was Harry Demopoulos, a pathology professor at NYU Medical Center. Last spring Demopoulos told the Consumer Product Safety Commission

that NYU's environmental institute had "discounted" an earlier study that showed a mixture of formaldehyde and hydrochloric acid caused cancer in rats. Upton has said Demopoulos' statement is groundless. No scientists from the NYU institute were present at the EPA meeting. Industry participated heavily in the other two sessions as well.

EPA officials, past and present, say that meetings to exchange extensive scientific data are traditionally announced in a public notice. Moffett noted in a letter to Hernandez that, under the law, advisory meetings between agency officials and regulated industries are subject to public disclosure. Hernandez replied in a 6 October letter that no notice was required because the meetings were not rule-making proceedings. He wrote, "[T]he sessions were not formal proceedings, but rather were designed to be free exchanges among the scientists and other technical experts in order to explore fully the scientific and technical issues."

Some of the participants at the formaldehyde meetings say they have been asked by Hernandez not to discuss them and to refer calls to him. One EPA scientist when asked about the sessions said, "I can't talk to you. I'm not a courageous man. I don't want to lose my job."

EPA held similar meetings with representatives of the DEHP industry during the summer. The sessions, which the Formaldehyde Institute has dubbed "science courts," have met with great enthusiasm from industry. James Ramey, board chairman of the Formaldehyde Institute, wrote to Hernandez, "I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank you for inviting the Formaldehyde Institute to participate in the first 'Science Court.' I found the forum intellectually stimulating and very helpful in putting a large volume of highly complex data into proper perspective. . . . I predict that the 'Science Court' may be a lasting trademark of this Administration."

As a result of the science courts, EPA's intention to regulate formaldehyde and DEHP is in limbo. The Natural Resources Defense Council hopes to spur the agency into motion in November with a lawsuit charging the agency with failure "to carry out its statutory duties . . . under the Toxic Substances Control Act." Albert, like many others, is not optimistic about EPA's future role in regulation. "The climate has chilled down quite a bit to regulate carcinogens. We're back to square one," Albert said.—MARJORIE SUN

Handler Receives Medal of Science

Philip Handler, who refused to allow himself to be nominated for the National Medal of Science while he was president of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), was finally bestowed the honor on 11 October. Science adviser George Keyworth and Handler's successor at the NAS, Frank Press, went to Boston to present it to Handler at the Deaconess Hospital where he has been ill since July. In announcing the award, President Reagan cited Handler's research in pellagra as well as his national leadership in furthering American science. Handler, a biochemist, was NAS president from 1969 to 1981. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy says that additional winners of the Medal of Science will be announced presently.

—Constance Holden

Gilbert May Leave Harvard for Biogen

Biologist Walter Gilbert is taking a year's leave of absence from Harvard University that may prove to be more permanent. He is leaving to become chief executive officer of Biogen, the genetic engineering company which he helped found.

Gilbert is trying to arrange with Harvard to keep a laboratory going in his absence. But the Department of Biochemistry, at present chaired by his colleague and sometimes rival Mark Ptashne, has a rule that only full-time faculty can be members. When his year's leave is up, Gilbert will presumably have to return to the department or resign from it. He is therefore exploring with the university the possibility of keeping a laboratory attached to a different department. "If the biochemistry department doesn't want me I will be somewhere else," says Gilbert.

Starting his scientific career as a physicist, Gilbert switched to biology and won a Nobel Prize recently for co-inventing with Alan Maxam one of the two DNA rapid sequencing techniques. The move to Biogen repre-

sents an even more radical change of fields. Gilbert says he finds running a business "fascinating," because of the chance to "create a structure in the external world."

Gilbert will continue to serve as chairman of Biogen's board of scientific advisers. His decision to join Biogen means that he will resign his American Cancer Society research professorship, which requires recipients to be full-time researchers.

—**Nicholas Wade**

Selling the Public on Nuclear Power

Representative Richard L. Ottinger (D-N.Y.) is trying to start a scuffle with the Department of Energy over a proposed public relations drive on nuclear power. On 12 October Ottinger publicized the contents of a memo drafted for Assistant Secretary of DOE Shelby Brewer outlining a multifaceted program that would cost about \$2 million. Proposed are such activities as arranging public appearances and interviews with friendly journalists for DOE officials, hiring writers to prepare articles for popular magazines, arranging meetings with local government officials and private civic organizations, and holding seminars for the press. The memo notes that nuclear energy has an "essential role" because "solar will not be available in time, if ever," and coal has its own problems. No mention is made of the role of energy conservation.

Ottinger, chairman of the House subcommittee on energy conservation and power, blasted the plan as a "blatant propaganda campaign for the nuclear power industry" and announced plans to hold hearings on the matter.

A committee aide says the plan is "part of the Administration's selective free enterprise energy policy." He says DOE doesn't think nuclear energy has gotten a fair shake, and the proposed campaign appears to be a sort of "affirmative action" program to rectify a history of neglect. The aide says Ottinger finds it "particularly shocking" that this initiative is being considered in light of the Office of Management and Budget's order for a moratorium on the development of

any new information materials (which occurred early this year around the time that Energy Secretary James B. Edwards ordered confiscation of a DOE consumer publication because he thought it slighted nuclear power).

DOE's biases notwithstanding, others regard the proposed plan as a hopeful sign that more scientific sophistication may be injected into the debate over nuclear power, whose public image has been foundering since the Three Mile Island disaster 2½ years ago. One spokesman for a pronuclear group, Mark Mills, argues that one reason emotionalism has outpaced factual evidence is that the Carter DOE did not fulfill its obligation to inform the public about nuclear power. Mills anticipates that scientists will be getting more involved in countering antinuclear publicity. "People are confused," he says. Even if no new nuclear plants are built, "somebody should tell them what's really going on."

Mills' group, Scientists and Engineers for Secure Energy, which includes many Nobel laureates, recently sent a telegram to the President applauding his nuclear power approach as one that will "help to ensure the viability of commercial nuclear energy" while adhering to the goals of international nonproliferation.

—**Constance Holden**

EPA Administrator Mum on Future Cuts

Anne M. Gorsuch, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), proved herself a smooth and elusive witness at her first appearance before EPA's main oversight committee, the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works.

The senators summoned Gorsuch to a special hearing on 15 October because of reports that she had proposed radical budget and personnel cuts for fiscal year 1983. Cries of alarm have been based on information contained in a document that she submitted to the Office of Management and Budget in mid-September and that was leaked to the press. It envisages a 20 percent cut in the 1983 budget. This, combined with the 12 percent cuts mandated by the

President for the current year would more than halve the resources of the agency when inflation is taken into account.

Gorsuch was asked by committee chairman Robert T. Stafford (R-Vt.) to explain the impact of further cuts at a time when EPA's duties are increasing. She said only that any discussion of the proposals for 1983 would be "speculation"; she would not acknowledge the authenticity of the leaked budget document.

Gorsuch generally dismissed criticisms of her performance. Asked about morale at the agency, reportedly at an all-time low, she replied that it was a "serious problem" but suggested that nervousness is inevitable when change is in the air. She said that reports that she was inaccessible to senior career staff members were untrue. To charges that she is divesting the agency of much of its seasoned talent, she replied that EPA is overburdened with high-level personnel, noting that 15 percent of EPA employees are grade 14 or higher, whereas the figure for the rest of the federal government is only 3.5 percent.

Gorsuch devoted her prepared testimony to a description of management reforms. She characterized the system that existed on her arrival as "chaos" and enumerated measures being taken to delegate more enforcement authority to states, to simplify various procedures, and to weed out unimportant cases of EPA-initiated enforcement litigation.

Gorsuch steadfastly resisted attempts by senators to learn how the staff might be cut if the alleged 1983 budget proposals materialize. She insisted that because of increased efficiency the agency will be able to improve its performance even with further reductions.

Gorsuch's condemnation of EPA's former management is at variance with a number of studies in which the agency has emerged as one of the most efficient in the government and as a leader in management and budget reform. Senator George Mitchell (D-Maine) observed that one of President Reagan's favorite books, *Fat City: How Washington Wastes Your Tax Dollars*, by Donald Lambro, identified the EPA as one of the three most efficient agencies in the government. —**Constance Holden**