

A Rescue Mission for an Agency in Distress

A former top official at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has formed a coalition called "Save EPA" to rescue the agency from demolition by the Reagan Administration. William Drayton, assistant administrator for planning and management during the Carter presidency, says the group will disseminate information about EPA's budget and reorganization to the press and members of environmental organizations in hopes that they will be stirred to action.

"The next 6 months are critical," Drayton warns. If EPA administrator Anne M. Gorsuch is not reined in now, he says, the agency's budget and number of personnel will be sliced in half by June. He predicts that if such cuts are made, it would take the research work at EPA at least a decade to recover because new staff would have to be hired and ongoing studies would be interrupted. The agency has already shrunk by 1000 employees—or one-fifth of the staff—since Gorsuch took over.

Save EPA is a loosely organized coalition that depends mainly on volunteer work. It is run on a shoestring budget that is mainly supported by Drayton's own money plus contributions from environmental groups and other individuals. Organizations such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Audubon Society, and the National Wildlife Federation, together with individuals such as Russell Train, head of the World Wildlife Fund, and past and present EPA staffers have all cooperated with Save EPA in one way or another. They trade information on the upcoming fiscal 1983 budget, monitor the reorganization plans, and notify local members of changes.

Drayton is counting on the public to protest cuts at EPA once it learns how dim the future looks for the agency. "I have an old-fashioned belief that people are intelligent. The polls say that they want to be able to see across the street. They want clean air. They don't want to be exposed to toxic substances. This Administration does not have a friendly agenda for EPA. I think people will be furious about that."

An EPA spokesman says that Save

EPA would have little effect on the Administration's plans. "Oh, we'll listen to them just like we do anyone else," says Byron Nelson. "But they won't have any direct effect other than the press they generate."

—*Marjorie Sun*

Scientists Start Fund to Fight Antivivisectionists

A group of neuroscientists, alarmed at the growing aggressiveness of the animal rights movement, is forming a legal defense fund for researchers whose work with animals makes them the target of animal welfare activists.

The president and chief organizer is Edward E. Coons, Jr., a physiological psychologist at New York University. Coons has spent the past 3 months working on the problems of Edward Taub, the psychologist who in November was convicted for neglect of his monkeys (*Science*, 11 December 1981, p. 1218). Coons and other supporters of Taub, including Neal Miller of Rockefeller University and Vernon Mountcastle of Johns Hopkins University, believe that Taub was set up by animal activists and that his case amounts to a grave miscarriage of justice. They also believe the National Institutes of Health (NIH) felt compelled to suspend his research grant for purely political reasons.

(Taub's monkeys are still in residence at NIH's animal facilities; his grant is still in suspension. His appeal is not scheduled to be heard in court until spring.)

The Biomedical Research Defense Fund, as the new entity is called, has so far collected about \$2500 for the purpose of helping Taub cover his legal expenses. The group is also following with interest a Connecticut case, in which an organization called Friends of Animals has sued the Department of Agriculture in an effort to stop the United States Surgical Corporation from using dogs to test its surgical staple guns.

Coons says he and his colleagues are "terribly concerned" about the animal rights movement and believe it poses "considerable danger to the freedom of research," particularly basic behavioral and physiological research.—*Constance Holden*

Formaldehyde Insulation Ban Overturned

A state ban on the use of foam insulation made from urea formaldehyde was overturned recently by a Massachusetts judge. The ruling may take on national significance because the Consumer Product Safety Commission is scheduled to vote on 8 February on whether to impose a nationwide ban on formaldehyde insulation.

Superior Court Judge John T. Ronan ruled on 18 January that the state health commissioner failed to compare levels of formaldehyde in homes with the insulation to those without before the ban went into effect in November 1980. In addition, the commissioner did not clearly establish that the insulation was the source of higher formaldehyde levels. The compound is also released from resin products such as plywood, particle board, and carpeting.

The judge said the state also failed to present sufficient evidence that a significant number of people would suffer an appreciable risk from exposure to formaldehyde. Furthermore, it did not specify a threshold level at which a consumer could safely be exposed. The judge wrote, "... [f]or an agency to promulgate administrative regulations rooted in ignorance, leaving the important issues of causal connection and contribution and incident rates unanswered, and indeed, even unexplored, is to perform its agency function in an irresponsible and totally arbitrary manner."

State assistant attorney general Bruce E. Mohl said in an interview that the state health commissioner has a different interpretation of the statutes and the kind of evidence needed before a ban is ordered. He noted that the state is likely to appeal.

Members of the formaldehyde industry were elated at the ruling. "We are extremely gratified. The court has ruled decisively in our favor," said R. Josh Lanier, head of the National Insulation Certification Institute.

The members of the Consumer Product Safety Commission may or may not be swayed by the Massachusetts ruling, an agency official said. Since the state ban was ordered in 1980, the evidence that formaldehyde