

leave such pitiful shreds of evidence that study seems futile.

Despite these drawbacks, the new society has attracted about 130 "founding members," all of whom hold professorial appointments at major universities. A new journal is planned, joining two in the field now—the *Zetetic Scholar* and the *Skeptical Inquirer*. So far the membership is heavily weighted toward men in the space sciences, followed by physicists and psychologists. —**Constance Holden**

## USDA Official Defends Loyalty Checks

The fact that the Administration has stopped making loyalty checks on peer reviewers at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not mean it considers the practice wrong. John Schrote, deputy assistant secretary of USDA, recently defended the policy of favoring scientists who are "philosophically compatible" with President Reagan's outlook. Schrote is now in the process of moving from the USDA to the White House, where he will serve in the presidential appointments review office.

In a telephone interview on 14 June, Schrote endorsed the views he expressed earlier to an agricultural scientist, saying that one of the Administration's goals is to break up incestuous old-boy networks in federal agencies. Ohio entomologist Robert Treece had written to the USDA to object to the mixing of science and politics. He received a reply from Schrote dated 24 May, which said in part:

"Obviously, those in the scientific community would like to have complete freedom to discharge and distribute funds among their peers as they see fit. However, Mr. Treece, we had an election in which the electorate strongly suggested they did not want business to continue as it had. Therefore, to make sure the voters' and taxpayers' views are considered and the 'good old boy network' broken up, we are selecting people who embrace the President's values and agendas. To suggest that only those scientists who are recognized by the present scientific establishment can make those determinations is the height of

elitism. We reject that notion and we believe this Administration should be responsible to the taxpayers, not a peer review committee."

Schrote told *Science* that he meant these comments to apply to basic research as well as to policy review groups. "To say that [these committees] were not politicized in the past is just baloney," he added, mentioning that the director of the USDA's basic research program under the Carter Administration came from Georgia, Carter's home state. The peer review committees ought to be balanced and bipartisan, Schrote said, but "If I have anything to say about it, they're going to have a similar value basis"—similar to the Administration's.

Schrote also claimed that the method of peer review at the USDA was biased in favor of the large, prestigious universities. "The whole process has been rather smelly in the past," he said. The Administration's emphasis on loyalty has not affected the quality of science being sponsored, Schrote insisted, because all the peer reviewers have been of the highest caliber. He would like to see other agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health challenge the scientific status quo as the USDA has. But, in his new position at the White House, he is unlikely to be involved in these matters. —**Elliot Marshall**

## Competition Increasing for Use of Outer Space

Over the next decade, the United States will face increasing competition from Europe and Japan for commercial exploitation of outer space, states a recent report by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). Foreign initiatives in the areas of satellite communications, remote sensing, and commercial production in outer space may soon challenge the longtime U.S. technical lead.

The report, prepared with the advice of a panel of officials from the U.S. aerospace industry and some aeronautical scientists, points to imminent competition from Italy and Japan, which are developing satellites capable of operating in a new and potentially valuable frequency range (30/20

gigahertz). Germany is working aggressively on techniques for producing commercial products in the vacuum of space, and France is set to launch a series of high-resolution remote sensing satellites, beginning in 1984. Already, the European consortium known as Arianespace has drained satellite-launching business away from the space shuttle.

The report, which recommends a vigorous U.S. response to this competition, was completed as the Reagan Administration neared the end of its own official review of U.S. space policy. The results of the review are scheduled for release sometime during the summer. —**R. Jeffrey Smith**

## New Award to Supplement Nobels

Scientists in fields that were slighted by Alfred Nobel now will have their own chance to have an award conferred by the king of Sweden. Holger Crafoord, a wealthy Swedish industrialist who made his fortune in pulp and paper products and in artificial kidneys, has established the Holger and Anna-Greta Crafoord Prizes for basic research in several fields neglected by Nobel. In addition, since Crafoord, who recently died, suffered from arthritis, there will be special awards for arthritis research.

The Crafoord Awards will be given in one subject each year and the subjects will rotate in the following sequence: mathematics, astronomy, bioscience, geoscience, bioscience, geoscience. The recipients will be chosen by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the award will be 800,000 Swedish crowns (about \$135,000). Half the award will go to the scientists cited by the Academy and half will be used to support Swedish research in the same field.

The first Crafoord Award is in mathematics and it will be given to Louis Nirenberg of New York University's Courant Institute and to V. I. Arnold of Moscow for their work in nonlinear partial differential equations. The two mathematicians will receive their awards on 29 September. A symposium on nonlinear partial differential equations will be held in connection with the award. —**Gina Kolata**