

"a letter from Dr. Darsee stating that, although he had no recollection of falsifying any research data, he acknowledged that the Panel's inquiry had established both the fact of falsification and his personal role. . . . It should be noted that Dr. Darsee's letter was a significant departure from his earlier assertions to the Panel that he had not engaged in any deceptive or irregular practices other than the single incident in May 1981."

Darsee is not speaking to the press, and attorney Gerard told *Science* that he cannot elaborate on Darsee's letter because "I don't know [what incidents] Darsee's statement about fraud referred to. He drafted the statement himself." Says Gerard, he does not "admit" to fraud "but says he doesn't recall."

Darsee has made one public comment on the case, which was released by a spokesman for Ellis Hospital after the Morgan and Raub reports were published in February. "I am asking forgive-

ness for whatever I have done wrong, and want to contribute to the medical system," Darsee said. "I must take responsibility for my actions and realize that it is my fault and no one else's."

According to hospital spokesman Andrew Foster, Darsee told hospital administrators about the situation at Harvard when he sought a fellowship in critical care medicine. His work there is "carefully supervised," Foster said, adding that Ellis Hospital believes his potential contributions to medicine and the Sclerectady area are "great."

Harvard officials also notified Ellis Hospital about the Darsee case, by letter when they first learned he was working there and a second time by telephone prior to the release of the Morgan and Raub reports. NIH has made no formal notification to Ellis, Raub says, but is aware that Harvard officials notified the hospital of the debarment proceedings. "Knowing what he knows now, hospital

administrator William Schirmer would hire him again," Foster told *Science*.

Until the 21 May incident at Harvard, Darsee was considered one of the brightest young cardiovascular researchers in the country. His papers, coauthored by major figures in the field, were published in important, refereed journals. And now, as those papers are reread with what Braunwald calls the "Sherlock Holmes perspective," it seems that they are full of errors. What is now apparent is that the data, in general, are too good, too neat, too perfect to be believed.

Why did no one catch it before? Braunwald, for his part, admits that even in the areas he knows best he failed to see what now seems obvious. "It takes a different mind set," he says, "to look at a paper and think total fraud." Says Morgan, "Maybe cases such as this will increase referees awareness when they're reviewing a paper." Maybe so.

—BARBARA J. CULLITON

White House Names New EPA Chief

William Ruckelshaus is appointed after John Hernandez becomes embroiled in charges of unethical conduct

The hopes of John Hernandez, Jr., for a permanent appointment to the top job at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were crushed during the week of 14 March, as three congressional subcommittees opened investigations of his involvement in an effort by the Dow Chemical Company to undermine an agency report on dioxin contamination in Michigan. At week's end, Hernandez, who was named acting administrator only 10 days earlier, stood accused of "unethical, unusual, [and] unprofessional" conduct in sworn testimony by EPA's regional administrator in Chicago, Valdis Adamkus. And the White House quickly concluded that Hernandez, like Anne Burford before him, would have to go.

His replacement will be William D. Ruckelshaus, 50, who formerly served as EPA administrator under President Nixon. Ruckelshaus is returning to the agency from the Weyerhaeuser Company, a timber and paper conglomerate, where he has been a senior vice president of law and corporate affairs. In announcing the appointment on 21 March, President Reagan said that "no one could bring more impressive credentials." Ruckelshaus told reporters that he was con-

cerned with "the future, not the past," and that his "immediate task is to stabilize the EPA and reestablish the dedication of the people there."

This may require considerable effort. News of potential wrongdoing will probably continue to unfurl in the coming months. Congressional investigators are already homing in on the latest disclosure, involving a series of memos by which White House officials were kept abreast of politically sensitive EPA decisions on hazardous waste dumps. Several former agency officials have alleged that the decisions were timed to harm or favor various political candidates in the autumn of 1982.

The undoing of John Hernandez was caused by a series of events in June and July 1981. Earlier that year, Adamkus had requested his staff to prepare a public report on the contamination of the Great Lakes region by polychlorinated dibenzo-*p*-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans, toxic by-products of certain herbicides and pesticides. Interest in the topic was piqued by the discovery of dioxin contamination in gull eggs and fish taken from the Great Lakes in 1980 and 1981, and in fish taken from several Michigan rivers in 1978 and 1979. The

highest contamination was encountered in samples from the Saginaw Bay area, on Lake Huron.

This was a matter of great importance to Dow, because the company's plant at Midland, Michigan, discharges effluent that passes into Saginaw Bay after flowing down the Tittabawassee and Saginaw rivers. When a draft of the report was leaked to a newspaper in Canada in June, one of the company's representatives contacted Hernandez in Washington and sought to obtain a copy. Hernandez had then been on the job as deputy administrator for a month. Hernandez telephoned Adamkus, attacked him for the leak, and asked where a copy might be obtained. As the document was then under review in Washington by the agency's experts on dioxin, a copy was readily available. Hernandez obtained it and passed it along to Dow on the following day.

Adamkus says that he shortly received two more calls from Hernandez. In the last, Hernandez was angry and worried, Adamkus says. "He angrily denounced the report, and called the work of our people trash." He mentioned the release of the draft to Dow, and said "that I should expect a call from company offi-

cials, and that I should talk to them. It was a strict instruction," Adamkus says that he was "disturbed, almost destroyed" by the conversation, which left a clear impression that Hernandez valued Dow's expertise above that of the agency's scientific staff.

The call from Dow was not long in coming. On the other end of the line was Etcyl Blair, Dow's vice president for health and environmental sciences. "I listened to his comments . . . and I realized that he was reviewing our document," Adamkus says. After telling him to call back, Adamkus visited the authors and "expressed to them my shock that a working document was being reviewed by the outside company involved."

The next call was shunted directly to Milton Clark, the 34-year-old toxicologist who wrote the first draft. According to his testimony, Dow reviewed the document line-by-line. "They thought the title was inappropriate, that it should be changed," Clark says. "We spent several minutes on this." The company requested, among other things, that the report reflect Dow's less alarming estimates of the risks of dioxin exposure. The company also requested revision or deletion of references to miscarriages, reduced fertility, and Agent Orange, a Dow herbicide used in Vietnam.

Simultaneously, Clark and a colleague, David Kee, received several requests for similar changes from EPA headquarters. Paul Brown, co-chairman

of EPA's dioxin work group, telephoned to say that "no one here disagrees with your conclusions," according to Clark's notes of the conversation. But publication of the report "would inflame the public." Marilyn Bracken, a deputy assistant administrator, said that the report would have to be changed. "She told me her job was on the line," Clark testified. "She told me Dr. John Todhunter had instructed her" to have certain lines removed. Todhunter directs EPA's toxic substances branch. Clark said that he was told by Donald Barnes, another EPA dioxin expert, that the changes were ordered both by Todhunter and Hernandez. Todhunter has denied it.

The icing on the cake was a call from Blair in which he promised that a final deletion of six lines would win Dow's concurrence with the report's release. The passage at issue indicated that Dow was "the major source, if not the only source" of dioxin contamination in the Saginaw Bay area. By this time, Adamkus says, it was clear that "Dow's comments carried a heavy load with . . . headquarters and that if we wanted a blessing or approval from headquarters . . . we definitely had to do something about it." The report was published in abbreviated form, minus all conclusions, and without a warning against the consumption of fish in the contaminated area. The effect of the omissions was to obscure all potential

health hazards, and to produce only a tepid public response.

In his defense, Hernandez says that "I thought it was a very minor kind of thing. If people wanted a copy, I gave it to them." Dow had generated much of the data, he added, "and I felt it was important that we get technical review from the scientists involved." He admits expressing objections to a passage on dioxin and miscarriages, and to the report's conclusions, but he denies ordering any specific deletions. In retrospect, he says, the report should probably have been circulated to parties besides Dow. Dow itself has dismissed the incident as a routine exercise in scientific peer review.

This was, in fact, not the first such incident. Rita Lavelle, the former director of EPA's office of hazardous wastes, urged at one point that a report on an asbestos dump be reviewed by the Asbestos Information Association. Hernandez had previously sent staff reports on formaldehyde and a substance known as DEHP to the Formaldehyde Institute and the Chemical Manufacturers Association for peer review. He subsequently overturned staff recommendations for regulation of these potential carcinogens.

In Michigan, nothing has been done to clean up the contamination described in EPA's report. The reason is that Dow has refused to return Hernandez's favor by supplying internal documents necessary for regulation.—R. JEFFREY SMITH

Revisions in Cancer Policy

Rita Lavelle had something to say about cancer risk assessment, House inquiry learns

Although Administration officials deny that there has been any recent change in the way the government regards cancer-causing substances, several experts in cancer research testified on 17 March that they have discerned a change in the last 2 years. Two of the witnesses described it as a "covert" shift toward tolerating higher public health risks.

This testimony was given in a hearing before the House subcommittee on commerce, transportation, and tourism, which has jurisdiction over toxic waste laws. The chairman, Representative James Florio (D-N.J.), organized the session, he said, to look into proposals which he feared might be the beginning of an effort to "define problems out of existence." Florio is an interested party

in a sense: one of the nation's problem dumps is in his state—at Price's Landfill, near Atlantic City. Suspected carcinogens, including trichloroethylene (TCE), have been found in ground water near the dump, raising concerns about Atlantic City's drinking water.

The subcommittee spent most of the day looking into old evidence and asking for comments from federal officials, independent scientists, and experts from environmental groups and industry. Florio's staff also released some new information in the form of policy memos gleaned from the files of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This material was a surprise to most people present and therefore not fully analyzed. For example, acting EPA administrator

John Hernandez seemed to have difficulty recalling the memos and was unable to shed much light on them.

Nevertheless, the papers do have an apparent message. They seem to indicate that the top officials of EPA—Hernandez; chief of the toxic waste cleanup program, Rita Lavelle; chief of research, Courtney Riordan; and chief of the office of pesticides and toxic chemicals, John Todhunter—were developing a new policy on carcinogens.

The key document, dated 5 October 1982, is a memo from Lavelle to Hernandez (then second in command at EPA) on a proposal to change EPA's posture on TCE in drinking water. Lavelle wrote to remind Hernandez that he would coordinate two actions: (i) as the "highest