

the technology without licensing agreements. One source told *Science* that when the agreement with Solarex is finalized, RCA's patent rights will be enforced, by litigation if necessary.

If Solarex does eventually begin large-scale manufacture of amorphous silicon cells, it will find itself competing head-to-head with Energy Conversion Devices, a Michigan company headed by entrepreneur Stanford Ovshinsky. Energy Conversion Devices has a joint venture with Standard Oil of Ohio to produce cells based on a process Ovshinsky developed. Oil money is also helping to bankroll Solarex: the company is one-third owned by Standard Oil of Indiana.—COLIN NORMAN

Peace at Hand for Nuclear Physics

The tug-of-war over who would win a grant from the Department of Energy (DOE) to build a \$100-million accelerator for nuclear physics research ended on 19 July when the Argonne National Laboratory withdrew from the struggle. This should clear the way for a rapid endorsement of the only other contender, a consortium of 23 universities known as the Southeastern Universities Research Associates (SURA). Because SURA was asked to reconsider its proposed construction site, it recently entertained the option of moving to Charlottesville, Virginia, but decided to stay in Newport News, where it can take advantage of some buildings and property donated by the state.

The controversy began in April, when a select DOE panel of physicists chose SURA's design as technically superior to four other submissions, including one drawn up by Argonne (*Science*, 27 May, p. 929). Not willing to accept this as a final decision, Argonne's director, Walter Massey, appealed to the Secretary of Energy, Donald Hodel. Massey wanted the decision reversed. To aid his cause, Massey recruited a number of Midwestern university officials and the Illinois congressional delegation, headed by its senior member, Senator Charles Percy (R). Argonne's backers argued that the decision had been influenced by other than purely scien-

tific criteria, such as SURA's enticing offer to create 35 new professorships in nuclear physics. Furthermore, the Argonne group said, DOE was under a mandate from another advisory panel to avoid launching new facilities when existing laboratories could do the same work. Finally, in what seemed a desperate gesture, Percy said that if SURA's design were truly better than Argonne's, then Argonne could take it over and build it in Illinois—but more cheaply.

For several weeks, Hodel played the shuttling diplomat, visiting alternately Percy's offices and those of SURA's chief backer, Senator John Warner (R-Va.). Both insisted that Hodel attend mass meetings of scientists and politicians from back home, and that Hodel appear afterward to tell reporters about the constructive dialogues he was having with both sides. Hodel cooperated, saying he was "highly impressed" with the presentations. But in the end, someone passed the word to Percy and Massey that the show could not go on forever. If they did not withdraw, there might be no accelerator at all. In a letter released on 19 July, Percy wrote: "We have been told by Administration officials that they are under no congressional mandate to fund this proposal and that a protracted regional battle over the location of the accelerator could, in fact, result in its not being funded at all." One newspaper reported that the official who got this message across was George Keyworth II, the President's science adviser. Keyworth's office would neither confirm nor deny it.

In a coordinated bowing-out, Percy and Massey released letters on 19 July thanking various supporters for the work they had done. They explained that the best they had been able to do was to produce a stalemate. As Massey put it, this "could hurt all of American science, because it would probably result in a postponement or cancellation of the accelerator." This would be "unfortunate" for "the United States is striving to maintain its leadership in key areas of science and technology in the face of intense foreign competition."

Massey noted that Argonne stands ready to help solve technical problems which surely will arise as SURA tries to build its accelerator. He mentioned that the whole episode had served a good purpose, showing "that

there is a deep concern on the part of the Illinois and other Midwestern state delegations . . . regarding the disproportionate flow of federal research dollars into states outside the Midwest region."

Percy concluded by observing that Argonne is seriously underfunded in the general equipment account, receiving one-fifteenth as much in 1983 as its sister labs. Hodel, Percy wrote, promised to correct this imbalance next year.—ELIOT MARSHALL

Oak Ridge Retracts Reprimand of Biologist

Joe LaGrone, director of Department of Energy (DOE) operations in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on 21 July retracted an official reprimand given to a scientist who used to work at the national laboratory there. The punishment was meted out in 1982 to biologist Stephen Gough for his spare-time investigation of mercury pollution in a creek bed near an idle hydrogen bomb plant (*Science*, 8 July, p. 130). Gough was accused of insubordination for collecting bits of moss and sycamore root one Saturday and sending them to another federal laboratory for analysis. Shortly after his reprimand, Gough left the lab to work for a private defense contractor.

The DOE, which owns the lab and the bomb plant, later came under pressure to declassify a 1977 study documenting mercury leaks and accounting errors associated with the bomb factory. The report was released in May, indicating that 2.4 million pounds of mercury had been "lost," and as much as 475,000 pounds may have gone into the creek.

LaGrone became the manager of DOE operations in April, about the same time Gough was preparing to leave. He inherited the mercury pollution, the personnel problems, and the public controversy that went with them. Many local observers, including Gough, give him high marks for his effort to mend relations with Tennessee and the town of Oak Ridge. Gough is obviously pleased to have his record cleared, but says he is not likely to accept LaGrone's offer of a new job at the Oak Ridge lab.

—ELIOT MARSHALL