

3400 offered a large monetary incentive to the states that would be hardest hit by the new law. For example, Ohio alone would have been entitled to \$3 billion in special federal assistance. However, this carrot was not alluring enough, for it was a congressman from Ohio, Dennis Eckart (D), who cast the deciding negative vote.

Eckhart says he intends to come up with a new approach to acid rain control, but environmental lobbyists are skeptical. As the National Clean Air Coalition points out, the momentum needed to carry a difficult compromise to fruition has been dissipated. It seems unlikely that Eckhart will be able quickly to devise a solution that is markedly different from or more attractive than the one that has been rejected.—ELIOT MARSHALL

Sakharov Hunger Strike Casts Doubt on NAS Plans

The news that Andrei Sakharov began a hunger strike in early May has come at an awkward time for the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. A delegation led by Academy president Frank Press is scheduled to visit Moscow in June to seek broader ties with Soviet scientists (*Science*, 18 May, p. 696), but there is now some doubt whether the trip will take place as planned. Press, who was traveling abroad last week, left word through a spokesman that the Academy would simply "continue to monitor the situation."

The Moscow visit is intended to seek new arrangements to supersede an agreement between the Academy and the Soviet Academy of Sciences, which lapsed in 1982. The Academy decided in 1980 not to renew the agreement, in part to protest the banishing of Sakharov to Gorki. Thus, Sakharov's current plight sharply underlines the fact that one of the major reasons for the current strained relations has not been resolved.

According to interviews given to Western journalists by a friend of Sakharov's, he decided to begin a hunger strike after Soviet authorities imposed restrictions on his wife, Elena Bonner. Sakharov has long sought permission for Bonner to leave the Soviet Union for treatment of a severe heart prob-

lem. She has suffered two heart attacks and, according to reports that have reached the West, her medical condition is becoming critical. Soviet authorities have not granted the permission, however, and in late April they revoked her rights even to leave Gorki.

Sakharov has apparently been contemplating going on a hunger strike for some time. In a letter to Jeremy J. Stone, director of the Federation of



Andrei Sakharov

American Scientists, dated 13 January, for example, he said that a trip abroad for medical attention had become a "question of life and death" for Bonner. "I have less and less hope that this problem will be solved by 'usual' means," he wrote, thus "I've been thinking of a hunger strike again, however monstrous it may sound. But is there any other way?"

—COLIN NORMAN

Obsolete Equipment

University researchers in computer sciences, physical sciences, and engineering have told the National Science Foundation (NSF) that one-fourth of their research equipment is obsolete. More than 90 percent of the department chairmen in these disciplines also reported that lack of equipment inhibited the conduct of critical research. Moreover, although half the equipment was purchased in the past 5 years, only 16 percent was classified as "state of the art."

These findings are part of a survey by NSF, which is a major funder of academic equipment. A similar survey covering the biological sciences is currently under way.—COLIN NORMAN

White House Enters Fray on DNA Regulation

Biotechnology has become a hot topic in the Reagan Administration. On 9 May, the Administration convened a working group with representatives from 15 federal agencies to discuss the regulation of biotechnology. The session was called at the behest of the Cabinet Council on Natural Resources and the Office of Management and Budget, which has shown increasing interest in this issue (*Science*, 4 May, p. 472).

The President's science adviser, George A. Keyworth, II, presided over the session, which was described by one participant as an organizational meeting. Keyworth's main message was "Let's maintain our competitiveness. Don't unwittingly do anything to stifle the technology," said John Moore, assistant administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

EPA is in the thick of things because it is currently developing a proposal for publication in the *Federal Register* that would describe its role in monitoring biotechnology products such as pesticides and toxic substances. EPA has claimed authority to regulate under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act. Moore last week reviewed the first draft of the agency's proposal.

Moore said Keyworth asked the agencies to figure out what jurisdiction they think they have to regulate biotechnology and to report back at the next meeting, which is to be held within 4 weeks.

During the past year, various federal agencies, including the Commerce Department, have met with industry representatives to ask how the federal government can help maintain the United States' lead in biotechnology. Not surprisingly, industry has warned against overregulation. But Cetus chairman Ronald Cape made an additional plea to the federal government at a meeting held on 8 May by the Industrial Biotechnology Association by calling for a major budget increase for the National Institutes of Health. "This is where government could help and it is not," Cape said.

—MARJORIE SUN