

for making comparisons and for measuring changes through time."

Included in the Melbourne collection is a series of 50 crania from Coobool Creek, all of which date to around 10,000 years. Milford Wolpoff, of the University of Michigan, had planned to study this series later this month in an attempt to address one of the most interesting questions of Australian prehistory: did the indigenous population derive from two separate migrations of Indonesian and South Asian people some 40,000 years or so ago? Migrations are frequently hypothesized in prehistory but are often difficult to investigate. The Australian material, particularly Coobool with its age intermediate between the supposed event and the present, offers an unparalleled opportunity to test a specific case. According to Thorne, the Coobool material is likely to be reburied.

Although there is a good deal of uncertainty about the pace of future events, discussions on the fate of various parts of the university and museum collections are expected to spread over months rather than weeks. "We will start from the position that everything should be put back in the ground, but we are prepared to discuss individual cases," a lawyer for the Aboriginal Legal Service told *Science*. "People who want to do research will have to justify its importance."

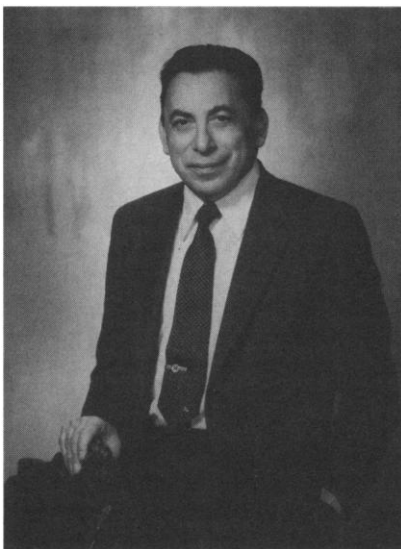
Meanwhile, Australian archeologists, who have been very active in raising the consciousness of the Aboriginal community to their heritage, are beginning to face potential problems themselves. According to several anthropologists in Victoria, reburial may eventually include cultural material in addition to skeletons, which, for archeologists, would be a cruel twist of irony. And the strength of feeling that is gathering can be further judged by the demands, now beginning to be voiced, that books containing sacred Aboriginal pictures should be removed from libraries.

There is a clear parallel between American Indians and Australian Aborigines in terms of the iniquities dealt them throughout history, but the contemporary combination of others' guilt and their own political clout appears to be handing the Aborigines an opportunity to grasp much more quickly and more completely what they now want: to wrest their heritage from the hands of their colonizers. But whether burying the whole of their heritage is the best way to preserve it, rather than entering into a collaborative scholarly appreciation of it as the American Indians have, is a matter that requires some dispassionate discussion.—**ROGER LEWIN**

## New NSF Chief Asks Hard Look at Budget

National Science Foundation director-designee Erich Bloch has not yet moved into the foundation's front office, but he has already made his presence felt by asking NSF managers to scrutinize their operations and identify where significant cuts in the budget might be made.

The purpose of the exercise, according to NSF officials, is to provide leeway to fund new programs. Bloch's request was made as a result of his involvement in the preparation of next year's budget which is now in the final stages at NSF. Foundation sources say that several worthwhile initiatives were being proposed for inclusion in the budget, but it was thought that the Office of Management and Budget



**Erich Bloch**

Trying to elicit NSF staff's priorities.

would not provide the substantial additional funds needed to pay for them. Bloch then requested that the whole NSF budget be examined to provide a basis for making informed choices on the budget. Foundation officials say that Bloch also sees the exercise as helping him to understand what priorities the NSF staff puts on its programs.

One insider noted that government budget-makers ordinarily focus on the "margin," that is the programs affected by funding changes from one year to the next. Bloch, with his IBM background, seemed to be following the

more usual practice in industry of looking at both the margin and the "base," or total previous budget, to establish priorities.

Some observers are interpreting Bloch's request as a sign that NSF is bracing for big cuts in the next budget. These members of the Washington science bureaucracy read the signs as indicating that, whoever may win the November elections, the pressures generated by the huge federal deficit will result in sharp reductions in controllable expenditures, among which R&D is vulnerably included. NSF officials reject this suggestion, insisting that there is "no hidden agenda" behind the Bloch exercise and claiming that NSF anticipates another favorable budget whatever the outcome of the election.

Bloch, an IBM vice president, was nominated on 6 June (*Science*, 22 June, p. 1318) to replace Edward A. Knapp who is returning to Los Alamos National Laboratory. Bloch was named to a recess appointment on 2 July, which would give him legal standing as director for the rest of this Congress pending Senate confirmation. Bloch, however, is winding up his duties at IBM and has not yet been sworn in. Knapp is expected to remain as operating head of NSF until September when Bloch is scheduled to take over formally.—**JOHN WALSH**

## Science Panel Plans Bush Report Update

The House Science and Technology Committee will embark in January on a 2-year study of U.S. science policy. In announcing the project, science committee chairman Don Fuqua (D-Fla.) noted that the committee is concerned that prevailing policies which were strongly influenced by Vannevar Bush's famous 1945 report, "The Endless Frontier," may not be adequate to the demands facing U.S. science in the future.

Committee sources say that initiative for the study came from Fuqua and other committee members who feel that it is time to look at the principles and assumptions underlying science policy in a way that it is not possible during the piecemeal process of legislative authorization.