
Details Delay Resumption of Polish-U.S. Exchanges

A new if temporary hitch in plans has developed since President Reagan on 3 August announced U.S. willingness to resume intergovernmental scientific exchanges with Poland that were suspended by the United States in 1981 as a result of the Polish government's declaration of martial law. An immediate problem now is to find funds to pay the U.S. share of the costs of cooperation.

Some \$2 million was available for the program at the time of the suspension and was held in reserve against possible resumption. Shortly before the announcement of Reagan's decision, however, Congress voted to use those funds to pay the U.S. costs of scientific exchanges under a bilateral agreement with Yugoslavia.

Prompt action is desirable because the plan calls for restoring the program with Poland in stages. The National Science Foundation (NSF), for example, has the go ahead to lift an embargo on travel funds for 25 cooperative research projects that were in progress when the ban was imposed in response to the 1982 expulsion of the U.S. science attaché in Warsaw by the Polish government.

Apparently no decision has been made on how the federal agencies will seek to solve the funding problem. U.S. policy requires that this country's costs be paid with accumulated Polish zlotys held by the U.S. Treasury. One question, however, is how Polish scientists will acquire U.S. dollars to pay living costs while visiting the United States to work on cooperative research projects. A policy change has ended an arrangement under the program by which zlotys could be converted to dollars.

Some delay in restarting the program had been anticipated (*Science*, 24 August, p. 817) mainly because of the necessity of concluding a new formal agreement with the Poles. U.S. agencies will not accept proposals for new joint research projects until a new Polish-U.S. bilateral agreement on scientific cooperation is negotiated and a funding formula nailed down. Sources in the State Department, which is responsible for the negotiations, say that discussions on a new

bilateral were reasonably far advanced at the time of the suspension and that no major difficulties are seen in reaching agreement.

The exchanges with the Poles date back more than two decades. The federal agencies most involved have been NSF, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Institutes of Health. NSF mainly oversees joint projects in basic research in the physical sciences and sources at the foundation say that the "demand" from U.S. scientists for cooperative work with their Polish counterparts has continued to be vigorous during the suspension, particularly in fields such as mathematics, theoretical physics, and astronomy in which the Poles are regarded as strong.—**JOHN WALSH**

Is Biotechnology Research Insurable?

Representatives of biotechnology companies soon will be asked to consider insuring themselves against the risk of having their research interrupted by events such as fire, theft, or vandalism. Coverage against interruptions caused by government regulation is, however, unlikely—insurance companies apparently regard such a risk as uninsurable.

The idea, which is said to be novel, is one of several being proposed by the fledgling Association of Biotechnology Companies (ABC) in Washington, D.C. The association is surveying several hundred biotechnology and allied companies to see whether an industry-wide insurance program can be put together, according to ABC official Bruce Mackler.

Johnson and Higgins, the New York insurance brokerage firm that designed the survey, is mainly interested in selling conventional insurance to biotechnology companies, according to the firm's representative Lee Frankel. However, there is not much to make such coverage special, she says. "So we may add some things to spice up the package and meet the peculiar needs of an industry."

For the biotechnology companies, that spice might be coverage against the risk of having research interrupted. Frankel says that such insurance "still does not exist" and there is "no

such coverage" in the pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

Other unusual coverage being considered for biotechnology companies includes protection against patent infringement liability and against inadvertent omissions from papers filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.—**JEFFREY L. FOX**

Peterson Leaving a Changed Audubon Society

Russell Peterson has announced he will retire from the directorship of the Audubon Society next June, a year earlier than originally anticipated.

Since assuming the Audubon post in 1979, Peterson has shaken up the venerable society by making extensive personnel changes, broadening the focus to global issues, and increasing the emphasis on political activism. Work is afoot on two major television programs and the society is putting out a new publication, *Audubon Action*. The society's membership has grown from 380,000 to 550,000.

Peterson's leadership has been at some cost to morale at the society, however. Several former employees characterize his management style as "autocratic" and his personnel practices "arbitrary" and even "cruel." An impressive parade of environmental professionals has come and gone under Peterson, many of them forced out. These include Rupert Cutler, former research director at the Department of Agriculture, and Jan Wallace, who was vice president for development at the Nature Conservancy.

One unpleasant conflict led to a threatened lawsuit by the former head of the North Dakota office, Richard Madson. Madson was awarded \$75,000 in an out-of-court settlement. (The office was closed in 1982 and its functions shifted to the Minneapolis office.)

Many Audubon employees have also been concerned that Peterson's interest in global problems and his rapid introduction of new programs have diluted some of the society's traditional wildlife functions. For example, they say some opportunities to join in wildlife litigation are being lost, and national forest management plans are not being monitored.