
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.

Audubon employees were recently alarmed by reports that the board had voted to auction off the society's library, which contains several rare works. Peterson says there is nothing to it, although the staff of the little-used library has been reduced to one librarian. Another source says the status of the library is uncertain and portions of it may be put in the custody of other libraries.

Peterson, who will be 68 in October, has held a dizzying succession of high-level jobs in the past dozen years, including directorship of the Council on Environmental Quality and of the Office of Technology Assessment.

He says his future plans are to focus his energies on his favorite problems: nuclear war, world population, development of renewable energy sources, and toxics in the environment. "I'm going to work like hell on them," he says. He also intends to write "the book."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

NIH and Hughes Institute Form Training Partnership

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute are starting a cooperative research training program for medical students. Financed by the private medical institute, the program will offer about 30 students a 6-month to 1-year stint on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland, where they will work with leading scientists in the intramural program. Students will reside in the newly designated Mary Woodard Lasker Center on the campus, in quarters that formerly were part of a convent (*Science*, 1 June, p. 969).

The new program offers Hughes Institute president, Donald S. Fredrickson, a former NIH director, an opportunity to renew his involvement there. For current director James B. Wyngaarden the cooperative venture furthers two objectives he has frequently identified as important. First, it should add to biomedical research a modest-sized but steady flow of bright young people with medical training. And, second, it offers NIH its first chance to participate in what he calls

a "unique public-private partnership"—an approach he deems necessary for maintaining U.S. leadership in medical research and care.

—JEFFREY L. FOX

FDA Amending Regulations to Reduce LD₅₀ Testing

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may inadvertently be perpetuating some uses of the LD₅₀ acute toxicity test, even though the agency has said that the test is no longer required to meet food and drug regulations, according to an internal FDA committee. The committee reported, however, that FDA is clarifying its rules in an effort to eliminate all unnecessary uses of the test.

The LD₅₀ test has long been a favorite target of animal welfare groups. It is used to obtain a crude measure of a compound's acute toxicity by finding the dose that kills 50 percent of a batch of test animals. Although it was once widely used in food and drug testing, it has been superseded in most cases by other measures. At a seminar last November, FDA officials maintained that the test is no longer required by the agency (*Science*, 9 December 1983, p. 1106).

A committee, established in January to review FDA's regulations and procedures involving the use of animals, has found, however, that LD₅₀ tests are specifically required for batch testing of three antitumor drugs and that several other FDA regulations mention the test in a way that may mislead companies into believing that its use is required. FDA is considering eliminating the requirement for the antitumor drugs and is rewriting its other regulations, the committee noted.—COLIN NORMAN

Japan Plans to Look to the Stars from Hawaii

The Japanese government is expected to approve next month a proposal that would put Japan in the front ranks of optical astronomy. The proposal, which was formally submitted

to the government on 21 August by a committee of astronomers, involves the construction of a 7.2-meter telescope on Mauna Kea in Hawaii.

The plan has already been discussed with officials of the University of Hawaii, and a cooperative agreement involving some shared time on the instrument is being worked out. Donald Hall, director of the university's Institute of Astronomy, is scheduled to go to Tokyo in October for further talks, and final Japanese government approval is expected to be announced then.

If all goes according to plan, construction will start in 1988, and the instrument should be in operation by 1993. The total cost is reported to be \$82.6 million.

Japan's proposed telescope would be firmly in the international big leagues. The largest optical telescope currently in operation is the 5.7-meter instrument at Zelenchuskaya in the Soviet Union. The University of Texas is, however, planning to build a 7.6-meter telescope at its McDonald Observatory, and two more instruments that would use multiple mirrors to provide the equivalent of even larger reflectors are on the drawing board. One, equivalent to a 10-meter instrument, is being planned by the University of California and will also be located on Mauna Kea. The other, planned by a consortium including the University of Arizona and Kitt Peak National Observatory, will be a national facility and will be built either on Mauna Kea or Mount Graham in Arizona.

—COLIN NORMAN

Comings and Goings

After three and one-half stormy years as head of nuclear power programs in the Department of Energy, **Shelby Brewer** is leaving to become senior vice president at Combustion Engineering. An MIT-trained nuclear engineer, Brewer's tenure was dominated by battles over the Clinch River breeder reactor, which Congress finally killed. He was also engaged in a desperate struggle to pull the department's uranium enrichment business back from the brink of disaster when it was caught with billions of dollars of construction in progress just as the world market went into a slump.