ting recipient of an AIDS-positive transfusion. The arguments about creating anxiety with sketchy information versus a person's right to know and to be medically followed pertain here as they did in the case of the donor. But the recipient, unlike the donor, cannot be asked for prior informed consent because there is no way of knowing in advance that he or she would get AIDS-positive blood. According to Robert Gordon of NIH, the decision about notifying the recipient is being held in abeyance in the hope that by the time the issue has to be faced, enough knowledge will have accrued in this rapidly moving field to permit researchers to convey more useful, clear information than they could now. For instance, within several months it might be possible to screen widely for the presence of viral antigen, rather than just antibody, in the recipient, which would give a better indication of his exposure and risk.

The ethical dilemmas surrounding the consent form in the heart institute's proposed long-term study will be echoed to a degree when the five competing U.S. companies begin clinical trials of the test kits they are now rushing to develop. Estimates are that as many as 20,000 blood samples will be screened as part of the investigational new drug clearance that precedes FDA approval for marketing. Likewise, once a test is available commercially so that the entire blood supply can be tested, questions of what to tell an AIDS-positive donor will be troublesome until the time comes that individuals either can be reassured that the presence of AIDS antibody is not an inevitable harbinger of serious infection or that successful therapy is at hand. However, health officials point out, despite the thorny issues that rapid test development is raising, the goal of trying to safeguard the blood supply is paramount.—**BARBARA J. CULLITON**

OSTP Seeks Advice on Export Controls

In a surprise move, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) has decided to establish an advisory committee to assist in drafting regulations governing the release of unclassified but militarily sensitive information. The decision to appoint the committee is being interpreted by outsiders as a move to help prevent the adoption of unpalatable controls on basic research.

The focus of the committee's work will be the Department of Commerce's export control regulations, which the Reagan Administration has been trying to redraft for at least 18 months. A version circulated among government agencies in July last year provoked outcries from scientists because it would have clamped down on the conduct and publication of research in several areas. A second draft, circulated recently, is said to be no more palatable.

The purpose of the proposed revisions is to restrict access by non–U.S. citizens to technical information in areas included in the Defense Department's militarily critical control list, a massive compendium of technologies that the department considers to have potential military applications. Currently, academic research not closely related to industrial processes is exempt from the export control regulations. But the revisions proposed by Commerce would require researchers in fields covered by the critical control list to obtain export licenses before publishing their results or delivering papers at meetings at which foreigners are present.

A meeting of researchers potentially affected by the regulations, convened by the National Science Foundation early this year, concluded that the draft circulated last July "would, if read literally, reach an enormous amount of cutting edge research, as well as development, production, and utilization." Export licenses would probably be required before conducting university research projects involving foreign graduate students or faculty members, and multinational companies would have difficulties in exchanging people and information between U.S. and overseas subsidiaries, the meeting concluded. One academic participant estimated that his own research and teaching would probably require between 100 and 200 licenses a year.

The regulations were drafted chiefly by the Department of Commerce, with substantial input from the Departments of Defense and State. OSTP got into the act more recently. When the drafts ran into heavy fire, an interagency committee was established to try to reach a consensus on a final version and OSTP was given the chairmanship. (The job has gone to Andrew Pettifor, an NSF official who has been on detail to OSTP for the past 2 years.) The establishment of an advisory committee to assist OSTP in its task was quietly announced by President Reagan's science adviser, George A. Keyworth II, with a notice in the 29 August *Federal Register*.

The announcement caught groups that have been closely following the moves on export controls by surprise, but the immediate speculation is that OSTP is hoping to gather support from the scientific community to head off restrictive provisions. They note, in particular, that the committee will consist of "an appropriately balanced representation of the scientific and engineering communities in those areas of science and engineering most directly impacted" by the regulations—those most affected will, presumably, be the loudest in protesting overly strict controls. No appointments have yet been announced; the committee is expected to consist of about 18 people and have a 6-month lifetime.

Deputy OSTP director John McTague says, however, that "right now, there is unanimity across the government agencies" that strict controls on basic research are unwarranted, and he implied that the Commerce revisions have been scrapped. OSTP is establishing the advisory committee, he said, "to get good expert advice. We want to see what the impacts [of the regulations] will be."

In the meantime, Congress is struggling to rewrite the Export Administration Act, the legislation that governs the export control regulations. Both the House and Senate have approved versions of the bill, and an endless series of conference committee meetings have attempted to reconcile the many differences between them. Agreement has apparently been reached on wording that would discourage the use of export controls to restrict communication of basic research, but the chief sponsors of the two bills are still so far apart on many other key issues that the chances of getting a bill passed this year are now considered no better than even. If no new bill is passed, the Administration will have a much freer hand to rewrite the regulations.

—**COLIN NORMAN**