

Acid Rain Report Allegedly Suppressed

Last spring, a House subcommittee voted 10 to 9 to scrap a key proposal to control sulfur dioxide emissions and, by doing so, killed any hope that Congress would pass legislation in this session to regulate acid rain. The outcome of the close vote might have been different, however, if an important report that advocates action opposed to the Administration's current acid rain policy had been released beforehand, says Representative Norman D'Amours (D-N.H.).

D'Amours recently charged that the White House science office suppressed a report that recommended the federal government take immediate steps to reduce emissions of sulfur and nitrogen oxides. The report was submitted to the Administration in early April. The House subcommittee voted on the acid rain regulations in May. The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), which released the report on 31 August, denies it suppressed the document.

The Reagan Administration has insisted that the acid rain problem needs more study before regulations can be formulated. The report, written by a nine-member scientific panel chaired by William A. Nierenberg, director of Scripps Institute of Oceanography, concludes that a reduction of 25 percent in deposition would significantly improve the acid rain problem and also that current federal research is misdirected. The panel, which was created by presidential science adviser George A. Keyworth, reached these conclusions after reviewing the quality of acid rain papers going into a joint U.S.-Canadian treaty document.

Thomas Pestorius, a senior policy analyst at OSTP in charge of the report, defended the timing of the release, asserting that the report was not actually completed until July. Pestorius said that Nierenberg and another panel member, Columbia University physicist Malvin Ruderman, were changing the report's summary as late as July. When asked who requested the changes, Pestorius said, "We asked [Nierenberg] to expand the executive summary. It took 5 months to negotiate the changes." But despite the changes, the version submitted by

the panel is virtually the same in substance as the one recently released by the science office. Kenneth A. Rahn, a panel member and atmospheric chemist at the University of Rhode Island, said in an interview that the facts are the same. He notes, however, that paragraphs were reordered and material added from the body of the report that changed the tone of the original summary. The net effect, he said, is that the new summary weakens the panel's message that the federal government should take action now. The panel as a whole was not consulted before the changes were made, Rahn said.

According to a Boston *Globe* article

"WE'RE GOING TO GIVE IT MORE STUDY"



—From *Herb Luback Through the Looking Glass* (W. W. Norton & Co., New York 1984).

on 15 August, Nierenberg reportedly said that he thought the report was completed in May. He is quoted as saying that "somebody in the White House ought to print the damn thing. I'm sick and tired of it." Nierenberg, who is on vacation in Europe, could not be reached for comment.

Pestorius also asserted that the panel's principal conclusion—that immediate steps should be taken to reduce acid rain—were disclosed in an interim report that Nierenberg released at a press conference more than a year ago.

But panel members note that the version submitted to the White House in April had the imprimatur of being a final, not a preliminary, report. Fur-

thermore, the findings presented in their final document considerably underscored the need for immediate action. Rahn said that the panel, in its final report, reached an important conclusion in calling for a 25 percent reduction in deposition. Rahn said that the debate over reductions has focused on a target of 50 percent. "We concluded that you don't have to paint this as an all or none debate." A 25 percent reduction, according to the report, would protect almost all aquatic life, such as plants and fish, although the chemistry of lakes and ponds would still change.

The panel was also highly critical of the direction of current federal research. The government has emphasized the development of computer modeling, investigations into the origins of acid rain, and the study of mechanisms through which emissions are converted to sulfuric and nitric acids. The panel says the government should give highest priority to assessing the ecological effects of acid rain and worry about these other areas later. "Ecological consequences are the *raison d'être* of the problem . . . It is critical that new funds be made available both to initiate additional studies and to continue and expand present studies." —MARJORIE SUN

OTA Studies U.S.-Soviet Space Cooperation

Worries about "technology transfer" and a "one-way street" to the contrary, cooperation with the Soviet Union on space science has greatly benefited the United States in the past and could prove even more productive in the future, according to a panel of scientists recently convened by the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA).

In fact, the danger may lie in not cooperating: the panel members pointed out that the Soviets have been improving their capabilities so rapidly—and have been pursuing non-U.S. partners so vigorously—that the Americans might one day find themselves isolated in space science.

The Workshop on Possible Future U.S.-Soviet Space Cooperation, held on 8 May at OTA headquarters, was actually part of a larger OTA study on