

award-approval authority to the NSF director. The aim is to free some of the board's time to review programs and projects at an earlier stage, when it can have more influence on the way they are shaped.

In addition, the board agreed to overhaul its committee structure. It will now have two standing committees, one to conduct the program oversight and review responsibilities and the other to oversee the foundation's science education directorate. The second committee will also be concerned with programs designed to bring women, the handicapped, and minorities into scientific careers—programs that have generally been given short shrift by the Reagan Administration.

These changes are said to be largely the work of Roland Schmitt, the head of R&D at General Electric and chairman of the science board. Schmitt has risen rapidly in prominence in the national science policy scene over the past 2 years.

—COLIN NORMAN

A Guide to Biology Texts

Last year, Texas rescinded a decade-old rule that required biology textbooks used in the state's public schools to carry a disclaimer that "evolution is treated as theory rather than fact." Yet, according to a review of 18 books submitted by publishers for use in Texas schools this year, the effects of the rule live on.

According to Wayne Moyer and William Mayer of People for the American Way, three of the proposed textbooks contain no mention of evolution at all, and several others include "highly qualified statements about evolutionary theory, omission of important evidence and continued inclusion of the 'Texas disclaimer'."

Moyer and Mayer, who reviewed the textbooks last year as part of an effort to head off the influence of creationists on the selection of books in Texas, have now published their analyses in the form of a consumers' guide,* intended to alert other school districts to what they perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the books submitted in Texas.

*A *Consumer's Guide to Biology Textbooks* (People for the American Way, Washington, D.C., 1985), \$5.

Their concentration on Texas is explained by the fact that Texas is such a huge market that it strongly influences the nature of textbooks sold nationwide. Publishers cannot afford to publish a special edition of their books for Texas, and thus what Texas approves is generally what the rest of the nation gets, note Moyer and Mayer.

There have, however, been some recent major changes in Texas that have radically altered the environment for textbook selection in the state. The requirement that publishers include a disclaimer about evolution being only a theory was dropped following a threat of a lawsuit by People for the American Way, an organization established by television producer Norman Lear as a counterpoint to the Moral Majority.

In addition, after a critical examination of the state's education system by a commission headed by computer magnate Ross Perot, the legislature approved a bill that replaced the elected State Board of Education with a body appointed by the governor. The education commissioner, who had held office for more than a decade, also resigned last fall. The new state-level apparatus provides less of a platform for the creationists, according to Moyer.—COLIN NORMAN

Europeans Agree to Join in NASA's Space Station

Ministers representing the 11 member countries of the European Space Agency last week gave their approval in principle to collaborating with the United States on the development of a manned space station. They also agreed to increase their budget for joint space projects by 70 percent over the next 5 years to pay for this and a number of other new projects, including the development of a new generation of Ariane launchers.

Meeting jointly for the first time since 1977 in Rome, the ministers, together with observers from three other European nations, gave their approval to a package of proposals aimed at setting the framework for European cooperation in space over the next decade.

Over a period of 5 years, a total of

\$160 million will be spent on the preliminary design of an experimental module expected to form Europe's main contribution to the space station, and on the development of a special cryogenic engine to power the new launcher, Ariane V. West Germany will take the lead on the first of these projects, and France on the second.

The ministers declined a proposal from the French government that they also agree to joint development of a manned minishuttle suitable for in-orbit operations, known as Hermes. The French had earlier claimed that this project was an integral part of their Ariane V proposal, the two together providing Europe with its own ability to construct a space station and engage in other space activities early in the next century.

However, in their final communique, the space ministers explicitly mentioned Hermes as a possible project for later collaboration, suggesting that in the meantime France might seek other partners on a bilateral basis, as it has already done with the SPOT remote sensing satellite. This move seems to have left the French satisfied that Hermes now figures officially on Europe's long-term agenda, even if it may take 2 to 3 years longer to complete than they had been suggesting. They have already received support for Hermes from Belgium and Italy, although both West Germany and Great Britain are still lukewarm.

Britain, in turn, failed to obtain a commitment for European funding for its own project for a reusable launch vehicle, known as HOTOL, which is currently receiving preliminary studies at British Aerospace. Again it was suggested that other countries might join the British initiative on a bilateral basis.

After the meeting, Hubert Curien, the French minister of research and technology and previously chairman of the ESA council, said that it had allowed European countries "to affirm their unambiguous support for the two principles on which we want to build Europe's space activities in the next 15 years: autonomy and coherence."

As for long-term collaboration on the space station, the meeting agreed that this depended on the successful outcome of current negotiations with the United States on the conditions under which they would be allowed to participate.—DAVID DICKSON