

## Biomedical Delegation Lobbies White House

Concern about the fate of the budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been acute ever since January when the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) moved to slash some \$200 million from NIH and limit new grants to 5000 (*Science*, 1 February, p. 498). Congressional aides report that thousands of researchers have written their Senators and Representatives to protest. And Congress itself is gearing up for a fight with OMB over this attempt to violate the intent of the legislature.

On 27 March, a group of leading scientists took the case for NIH not only to Congress but also to the Reagan Administration. Operating as the "Delegation for Basic Biomedical Research," the small Massachusetts-based group, founded in 1977, has 14 members.\* The scientists met on Capitol Hill with representatives of the House and Senate appropriations committees, among others, and were told by Representative William H. Natcher (D-Ky.) that support from the Administration is the key to substantial, sustained growth. At a press luncheon, delegation members reported that Natcher said, "Congress can only do so much" in terms of appropriating funds in excess of what the President requests every year in his annual budget.

"The point we scientists really have to get across," says delegation spokesman Mahlon Hoagland of the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, "is not just that the 6500 grants should be restored. We have to convince them of science's need for stability in funding, along with money for construction." The delegation is also seeking support for "a change in the budget process itself," with longer awards so that researchers spend less time filling out grant applications and more time doing research. It urges 5-year grants for junior investigators and 7-year grants for senior scientists.

\*Nobel laureates David Baltimore, Arthur Kornberg, George E. Palade, Hamilton O. Smith, and James D. Watson, plus Floyd E. Bloom, Ronald E. Cape, Donald S. Fredrickson, Mahlon Hoagland, Francis D. Moore, Steven Muller, Charles L. Schepens, Lewis Thomas, and Federico Weiss.

At the White House, nine delegation members met with William L. Roper, a physician on the President's staff, White House liaison Judith H. Buckalew, and John F. Cogan of OMB. Bernadine Healy (formerly Bulkley) of the Office of Science and Technology Policy was unable to attend. The meeting was described as "cordial but not as productive as we had hoped." The reason: Cogan stuck to the Administration's theme of cutting the budget, a position directly at odds with the delegation's view. On a return visit to Washington, delegation members will try to press their case with White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

—BARBARA J. CULLITON

## Watson Fights Back

Every now and then, the constraints of usual discourse are thrown off in the name of plain speaking. In recent remarks at Stanford University, Nobel laureate James D. Watson, never shy, took on the Reagan Administration over the issue of regulations governing genetic engineering.

Calling most of the regulations "simply useless," Watson said, "One might have hoped that the Republicans would have been more sensible about regulations, but they were just as silly as the others. . . . The reason is that the White House receives its advice from people who know something about physics or chemistry. The person in charge of biology is either a woman or unimportant. They had to put a woman some place. They only had three or four opportunities, so they got someone in here. It's lunacy."

Bernadine Healy (formerly Bulkley), a Harvard Medical School graduate who is on leave as a professor of cardiology at Johns Hopkins, is the White House science adviser's deputy for biomedical affairs. She first heard about Watson's comments when members of the Delegation for Biomedical Research, of which he is a member, called her to apologize. Healy said simply "Watson's remarks are an offense to both men and women."

Watson told *Science* that "Anyone who heard me would know I meant it as a slap at the Reagan Administration, not at Bernadine." However, he added, "I do think they should have a qualified scientist handling these is-

sues in the White House, not a physician."

Lambasting those who debate genetic engineering as a threat to the integrity of plant and animal species, Watson noted, "There is a debate now as to what is the right of a mouse. Why are we wasting time in Washington with taking seriously this business? . . . This is complete and absolute craziness. Lawyers will be taking money debating these issues. We should come out pretty fast and we should have strong views. We have to fight back."

Watson's remarks were disseminated through a Stanford University press release.—BARBARA J. CULLITON

## Reagan Names Space Commission

President Reagan has named the members of the long-awaited National Commission on Space. Mandated last year by Congress, the commission will, in Reagan's words, "devise an aggressive civilian space agenda that will carry us into the 21st century."

The 14 members were announced by Reagan on 29 March during an address to the National Space Club. Not surprisingly, they tend to be strongly pro-space. The members are:

- Thomas O. Paine (chairman), a former administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

- Laurel L. Wilkening (vice chairman), a planetary scientist and vice provost of the University of Arizona.

- Lieutenant General Charles E. Yeager, first man to fly an airplane faster than sound.

- Neil A. Armstrong, first man to walk on the moon.

- Kathryn D. Sullivan, astronaut.

- Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, outgoing U.S. ambassador to the U.N.

- Luis W. Alvarez, Nobel laureate physicist at the University of California, Berkeley.

- Paul J. Coleman, geophysicist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and president of the Space Research Association.

- George B. Field, former director of the Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and chairman