DOE's methodology was first described by the council as being inadequate and biased in a 26 April letter sent to the department. In the wake of that criticism, DOE is adopting a multiattribute utility technique for evaluating sites in Texas, Nevada, and Washington states. These states, along with environmental organizations, have been challenging the way the department has proceeded with its site selection process. DOE aims to open the first repository, which would contain high-level wastes deep underground, in 1998.

DOE's Office of Civilian Waste Management had sought to issue final environmental assessments on potential sites by 20 December. But in response to NRC recommendations, the department is delaying their release until mid-February to provide adequate time to apply the new evaluation criteria. ". . . It is crucial that DOE take the time to do the job right," says Frank Parker, chairman of the council's board on radioactive waste management. He notes that the complexity of the multiattribute utility method "demands scrupulous, methodical implementation. . . ."

DOE also has asked NRC's board on radioactive waste management to provide the recommended independent review of the application of site-evaluation criteria for bias. The NRC board was "concerned that DOE's use of its own technical experts to assess performance by this subjective method [multiattribute technique] may mask the degree of real uncertainty associated with post-closure issues," says Parker. Post-closure involves the ability of a site to contain radionuclides after it has been filled to capacity and sealed.

This matter is of intense interest to critics of DOE's waste disposal program. In particular, states and environmental groups have challenged DOE's assertion that the candidate sites are virtually indistinguishable with respect to their ability to protect the environment and public health. The credibility of DOE's findings would be substantially enhanced," Parker says, if DOE's procedures were verified by an independent body. While the council has endorsed DOE's methodology, Parker notes that it remains to be seen if the department will execute the site selection analysis properly.—**MARK CRAWFORD**

Academy Receives Gift for West Coast Center

The National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering will soon have an outpost on the West Coast thanks to the largesse of the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, which is donating $20 million for the establishment of a study center adjacent to the University of California at Irvine. The center will be built on a 7-acre site valued at $6 million donated by the Irvine Company, which developed the city of Irvine.

The gift is the latest in a continuing bonanza for American science arranged by California entrepreneur Arnold O. Beckman, 85, who has made a fortune in manufacturing precision instruments. In 1982 his company, Beckman Instruments Inc., merged with Smith-Kline Corp. of Philadelphia to form SmithKline Beckman. Beckman formed the foundation to distribute his holdings before he dies.

Arnold O. Beckman

The center is to be completed by the spring of 1987. According to NAS president Frank Press, it will not only improve access to the NAS-NAE by California members but will mean closer ties to the scientific communities of Japan and other nations of the Pacific. The center is expected to strengthen Academy programs on training and instrumentation, technology transfer, international collaboration, and science-related ethical and social issues. Both academies are now engaged in a major fund-raising effort to support the expanded activities.

Beckman's foundation has so far donated more than $100 million in gifts, including $40 million to the University of Illinois for two multidisciplinary research centers, on computing science and on behavior and cognition. Other major gifts include $12 million to Stanford University for a new center on molecular and genetic medicine; $10 million for a research institute at City of Hope Medical Center in Duarte, California; and $7 million for laboratories and an auditorium at the California Institute of Technology.—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**

Administration Drafts Biotech Plan for OECD

After considerable disagreement, federal regulatory agencies have hammered out a proposal to set up international guidelines to regulate biotechnology. The plan will be presented for consideration in December at a Paris meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The organization, which includes the United States, most of its European allies, and Japan, has been discussing the need to develop a set of principles to regulate biotechnology for the past 2 years.

The proposal represents a revision of a plan that the Administration floated for discussion last spring at an OECD meeting. But U.S. delegates themselves disagreed about the content of the proposal (*Science*, 30 August, p. 842). The original proposal was drawn up mainly by the Environmental Protection Agency, but was criticized for being too regulatory in tone by other U.S. agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration, the State Department, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since then the U.S. agencies have been trying to iron out their differences.

The new version is a broad outline of points to consider without some of the regulatory detail that was originally included, such as a list of specific controls on large-scale production of microbes. Unlike the first plan, the new one proposes a uniform system to classify organisms according to their pathogenicity so that countries do not regulate a particular organism differently, and it discusses general methods of risk assessment related to biotechnology products.

—**MARJORIE SUN**