

Wildlife-Conservation Merger

The World Wildlife Fund-U.S. (WWF) and the Conservation Foundation (CF) have joined forces as of 4 November. WWF president Russell Train is now chairman of the board, and CF president William K. Reilly is president.

The merger, which has been discussed for about a year, is regarded as a natural alliance in view of the way both Washington, D.C.-based organizations have been developing. The foundation has been getting more involved in the international environmental and natural resources issues, and the fund needs more expertise in such matters as pollution control, water-use and land-use planning. The happy couple has moved into a new office. "At a stroke, each group obtained what it felt it needed," says a staff member.—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**

Livermore Acknowledges X-ray Laser Problem

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory has officially confirmed that equipment problems have hampered tests of the x-ray laser, an important element of the ongoing "Star Wars" missile defense research program. According to a statement prepared by the lab on 12 November and attributed to George Miller, Livermore's acting associate director for defense systems, there are "unresolved scientific issues associated with the difficulties of measuring some properties of x-ray lasers."

The statement follows a report in *Science* (8 November, p. 646) that the results of a key x-ray laser test in March were thrown into question by the discovery that monitoring equipment had been miscalibrated. As a result, doubts have been cast on a public report, based on the test, of a dramatic increase in laser brightness, considered essential to the development of a militarily useful defensive weapon.

Shortly after the statement was prepared, Livermore decided not to release it, partly because of a decision

that it was not "useful," according to Mike Ross, a laboratory public relations official. But in an interview, Miller acknowledged that "measuring some of the properties of x-ray lasers is very difficult. We understand that and we have understood it for some time." He also confirmed that analytical uncertainties continue to bedevil the research effort. "We have a tremendous amount of research to be done in this program, and some of it involves new types of instruments to make new types of measurements," Miller said.

He emphasized that these uncertainties have been "taken into account both in terms of the way we have planned the experiments and the way we represented the experimental data" to independent scientists who routinely review the program's progress, such as those who belong to JASON, a DOD advisory group, and those who work at other nuclear weapons laboratories. This is confirmed, at Miller's suggestion, by physicist Sidney Drell of Stanford University. Drell, a JASON member who was briefed on the program in September, says that the laboratory "is aware of the problem, and seems to be addressing it," although he cannot go into details because of secrecy restrictions.—**R. JEFFREY SMITH**

Venezuela Putting Squeeze on Foreign Scientists

The Venezuelan government is apparently trying to ease its foreign debt situation by making it more difficult for non-native scientists to work in the country.

According to Guillermo Whittenbury, who works at the research institute (IVIC) of the Venezuelan Ministry of Health, the institute's director notified its foreign scientists 3 months ago that, under a new edict, they have no rights to tenure or retirement pensions and can only work for the government on a contract basis. Whittenbury, a Peruvian biophysicist, has worked at the institute for more than 20 years but has not applied for citizenship because until recently he was running a Unesco project.

There are about 18 foreign scientists at the institute. They have written the director to protest the ruling and,

says Whittenbury, health ministry lawyers are studying the matter.

"The economic situation is difficult," says Whittenbury, and the government is "trying to find money from any possible source." Whittenbury has already been granted tenure at the institute; now he fears that he will have to emigrate if the new policy is not reversed.—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**

President Names Members of Peace Institute

The White House, more than 6 months after the April deadline, has nominated most of the members of the board of the United States Institute of Peace which was authorized by Congress last year. Supporters of the peace institute are relieved, since it has not had the support of the Administration.

John Norton Moore, director of the Center for Oceans Law and Policy at the University of Virginia, is to be chairman of the board. The other eight public members will be Sidney Lovett, minister of the First Church of Christ Congregational Church in West Hartford, Conn.; Richard John Neuhaus, director of the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society in New York; W. Bruce Weinrod of the Heritage Foundation; Dennis Bark of Stanford University's Hoover Institution; W. Scott Thompson of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and a founder of the Committee for the Present Danger; Allen Weinstein, president of the Center for Democracy in Washington, D.C.; William R. Kintner of the University of Pennsylvania; and Evron Kirkpatrick, president of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation in Washington, D.C. Confirmation is expected shortly.

Four additional members are designated by the law: Kenneth Adelman, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; arms control negotiator Max Kampelman; Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle; and Lieutenant General Richard D. Lawrence, president of the National Defense University.

The institute, which has a \$4-million appropriation for fiscal year 1985 is to be located in the Washington area.

—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**