

Frank Press Reelected President of NAS

Members of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) have voted Frank Press into office for a second 6-year term as president. They also elected a new home secretary, Peter H. Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden and chairman of the NAS committee on research opportunities in biology. Raven, a specialist in plant biology, takes the place of Bryce Crawford, Jr., professor emeritus of chemistry at the University of Minnesota.



Frank Press: Chosen to head the Academy for six more years.

In addition, four new members were elected to the NAS Governing Council: Mildred Dresselhaus, professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); Roald Hoffmann, professor of physical science at Cornell University; Kurt J. Isselbacher, professor of medicine at Harvard; and Phillip A. Sharp, director of MIT's Center for Cancer Research. ■ E.M.

FDA Approves AZT

On Friday, 20 March, the Food and Drug Administration approved the anti-AIDS drug AZT, or azidothymidine. The drug, which prevents the AIDS virus from replicating but does not cure AIDS, is expected to cost each patient \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year. Burroughs Wellcome, the drug's man-

ufacturer, plans initially to restrict the distribution of AZT to patients who have had infections with *Pneumocystis carinii* or patients with severe AIDS-related complex (ARC). These are the groups that were shown to benefit from AZT in a randomized controlled trial that was completed last fall. It is not yet clear whether AZT will prolong the lives of other classes of AIDS patients—studies are under way—and Wellcome says it does not yet have a sufficient supply of the drug for all AIDS and ARC patients (*Science*, 20 March, page 1462). ■ G.K.

Technology Study Gets Under Way

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is gearing up for a major study of U.S. technology policy. A special task force is being established under the chairmanship of Representative Buddy MacKay (D-FL); the senior Republican on the panel will be Representative Ron Packard (R-CA). The effort, which is expected to last at least 2 years, will encompass the currently fashionable topic of industrial competitiveness, which should ensure some public attention for the task force's activities. Other members of the technology policy panel are yet to be chosen, but given the political interest in the subject matter, there is expected to be no shortage of would-be members. The effort will be a follow-on to the committee's 2-year investigation of science policy, which concentrated mostly on basic research. The final report of the science policy task force is still being written. ■

C.N.

Chapter 11 for USA, Inc.

United Sciences of America, Inc., marketer of controversial nutrition supplements, filed for bankruptcy in January. USA, Inc., had been battling bad press over what had been regarded as overblown claims about its products. Furthermore, members of its star-studded scientific advisory board, a number of whom resigned last year, had been heavily criticized for lending their names to the enterprise (*Science*, 28 November 1986, p. 1063). Former board member Robert J. Morin of Harbor-University of California (Los Angeles) Medical Center says the company suffered a "drastic downturn in their business owing to adverse media publicity." He added that "the company just wasn't being run properly" and that members of the scientific board had no control over what it did. ■ C.H.

Science Wins Olive Branch

For the second time, *Science* has received an Olive Branch Award for its coverage of arms control. Articles by News and Comment reporters David Dickson, Colin Norman, and R. Jeffrey Smith (now at the *Washington Post*) were cited by the awards committee for presenting "some of the best, most incisive policy analysis to be found on the newsstand." *Science* was credited with creating "an excellent forum for coverage of nuclear weapons . . . [and for] steadfastly refusing to limit itself to just one angle or one approach."

The Olive Branch is sponsored by the Editor's Organizing Committee, the Writer's and Publisher's Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Center for the Study of War, Peace, and the News Media at New York University. *Science* also won an Olive Branch Award in 1984. ■ B.J.C.

Soviet Patents

The Soviet Union is considering introducing new patent legislation in order to speed up the application of scientific results to technological products, according to senior government and industry officials in Moscow.

Participants in a debate on Soviet television last month, including Lev Komarov, the first deputy chairman of the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Inventions and Discoveries, claimed that relatively few of the nation's officially registered inventions and discoveries—currently numbering more than 1 million—have been exploited in practice. If used properly, it was claimed, these could have saved the Soviet Union many millions of rubles, according to a report of the debate published by the Soviet news agency Tass.

The Soviet Union's traditional patent system was abolished by Lenin after the Russian Revolution on the grounds that it enshrined scientific knowledge as private property. When reintroduced in 1931, it was primarily on the basis of "inventor's certificates," under which a research worker receives a cash award for a potentially useful discovery, but the discovery itself automatically becomes the property of the state.

In recent years, some Western companies have claimed that relative lack of protection under the Soviet patent system, when compared to practices in the West, has made them reluctant to trade with the Soviet Union in certain areas of advanced technology, including some—such as pharmaceuticals—where no patent protection is available at all in the Soviet Union. ■ D.D.