

APS Urges No Early Deployment of SDI

The council of the American Physical Society, the largest organization of physicists in the United States, has approved a resolution urging that there be no early commitment to deploy elements of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. The statement notes that a committee sponsored by the society recently concluded that lasers and other directed energy technologies currently fall far short of the power levels needed for weapons applications. At least another decade of research is needed to determine whether workable directed energy systems can be developed, the committee said (*Science*, 1 May, p. 509).

The council resolution went one step further. "It is likely to be decades, if ever, before an effective, reliable, and survivable defensive system could be deployed," the statement said. Thus, "development of prototypes or deployment of SDI components in a state of technological uncertainty risks enormous waste of financial and human resources." ■ C.N.

NIMH Headhunt Reopened

The search for a new director for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to replace the departed Shervert Frazier has been reopened following objections by a variety of mental health organizations to the list of candidates, which had been narrowed down to 11 white male psychiatrists. The objections were voiced by the American Psychological Association in conjunction with 25 other organizations, who wrote Health and Human Services secretary Otis Bowen decrying "the absence of competitive candidates from nonpsychiatric disciplines or who are women or ethnic minorities. . . ."

Alan Kraut of the APA observes that the NIMH has always been headed by white male psychiatrists, but his organization thinks it's time for a change in the old ways of doing things. The group has also enlisted the sympathy of a number of members of Congress.

Conspicuously absent from those objecting to the selection procedure is the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, made up of families of schizophrenics, whose board recently resolved that NIMH should be returned to its original home in the National Institutes of Health. ■ C.H.

Shapiro to Leave Michigan for Princeton



"We have each communicated to President Shapiro our strong desire that he stay at the University of Michigan. We have made our best arguments and offered every reasonable inducement for him to continue as president. However, our arguments were unavailing." Much to the obvious disappointment of Michigan's Board of Regents, Harold T. Shapiro announced last week that he is going back to Princeton University, his alma mater, as its next president.

An economist, Shapiro has been president of the University of Michigan since 1980 and has held a variety of faculty and administrative positions at the university since 1964, the year he was awarded his Ph.D. from Princeton. ■ C.N.

Two Committees Vote to Mothball the N Reactor

The nation's chief source of plutonium for weapons, the N reactor in Richland, Washington, received two votes of no confidence in Senate committees last week. The reactor has been shut down since early this year for refueling and a \$50-million safety improvement program. Environmental groups and others opposed to the reactor's operation have asked Congress to cancel plans to restart it in July.

On 30 April the Senate energy appropriations subcommittee voted to withhold funds for running the N reactor through 30 September. The same day, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to mothball the reactor and divert funds for its repair to the defense plant at Savannah River in South Carolina. To replace the lost capacity, the Armed Services Committee endorsed a plan to build a new reactor, bearing a price tag estimated to be as high as \$8 billion. The committee also recommended converting an

abandoned commercial reactor in Washington state to military use and approved of plans to build a special isotope separation plant to upgrade old plutonium stocks for use in weapons.

Secretary of Energy John Herrington issued a statement urging Congress not to shut down the N reactor. "Without this production capacity," he said, "improvements in the quality of [U.S. strategic] forces would be severely compromised." Meanwhile, Herrington has asked a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel to examine a proposed system for dealing with hydrogen gas at the N reactor. The request will delay release of the NAS safety review from its original publication target in May until late summer. ■ E.M.

Hughes Comments on Fredrickson's Leave

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has issued a brief statement about HHMI president Donald S. Fredrickson who 3 weeks ago requested an "extended leave of absence" from the research institute he has headed since 1984 (*Science*, 1 May, p. 510). The statement, made in the name of George Thorn, chairman of the Hughes trustees, is the first official comment since Fredrickson's abrupt departure on 20 April after he and the trustees apparently could not resolve conflicts over management. According to Thorn's statement, the trustees are conducting a review of "certain administrative activities in Bethesda during the past 2 years." It lends support to speculation that the dispute centers on the way Fredrickson has handled matters at HHMI's well-appointed Bethesda headquarters and is not related to his management of the institute's large research program. The trustees expect to complete their review in about a month. ■

B.J.C.

Mars Observer: Still 1992

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has once again decided against a 1990 launch for its Mars Observer mission. In mid-April the agency rejected an offer from upper stage booster manufacturer Orbital Sciences Corporation of Fairfax, Virginia, to help it buy a Titan 3 booster for the launch (*Science*, 27 March, p. 1568). Instead, NASA has put the mission on course for a 1992 launch aboard the space shuttle. NASA officials say accelerating the spacecraft's development to meet a 1990 launch schedule would have required an additional \$90 million. ■ M.M.W.