

Biting the Bullet

National Science Foundation director Erich Bloch's remarks at a recent physics meeting are likely to make high-energy physicists await next year's NSF budget with high anxiety. Noting that the foundation is under pressure to limit spending "just like everyone else," Bloch suggested that "Perhaps it is time we consider concentrating resources in those areas of physics research where alternative sources of funding do not exist, where NSF could have the greatest impact."

In his comments at the joint meeting of the American Physical Society and American Association of Physics Teachers, Bloch observed that NSF last year spent \$42 million on high-energy physics, more than a third of the total physics division budget, but said that this amounted to less than a tenth of total federal support for high energy physics. The Department of Energy is the major patron of such research. In implying that high-energy physicists might have to look outside NSF for funding, Bloch said, "I am saying this with some trepidation obviously. On the other hand, we better understand that trying to do everything is to accomplish nothing—and priority setting is part of our responsibility." ■ J.W.

Academy/IOM Name AIDS Panel

The National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine have appointed an oversight committee "to monitor the nation's response to the AIDS epidemic."

The committee's first task will be updating the academy's oft-quoted 1986 report, *Confronting AIDS: Directions for Public Health, Health Care, and Research*. The new document will be released in late spring or early summer, says committee chairman Theodore Cooper, executive vice president of the Upjohn Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A cardiologist by training, Cooper, like several persons on the 8-member panel, has not treated AIDS patients or done AIDS research. Instead, he brings to the group a long history of work in government, public health policy, and industry. The committee will be assisted by about 80 "correspondents," researchers who will advise the members of developments relating to AIDS. Cooper says the panel will be interested in making "the distinction between activity and progress" in AIDS research, treatment, and prevention.

In addition to Cooper, the committee

members are: Stuart Altman, Brandeis University; David Baltimore, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research; Christine Gebbie, State of Oregon's Health Division; Donald R. Hopkins, Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta; Kenneth Prewitt, Rockefeller Foundation; Howard M. Temin, University of Wisconsin at Madison; and Paul Volberding, San Francisco General Hospital. ■ W.B.

Koop Floats a Plan; CDC Not Impressed

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop told reporters at an international AIDS conference in London that he would like to test the blood of college students as part of an effort to measure the prevalence of the AIDS virus in the so-called general population. Koop was very specific about how such a survey might be executed. According to Jim Brown, a spokesman for the Public Health Service who was with the Surgeon General in London, Koop said the study would probably be at "a major university in an urban setting." It would be an all-day "gala" event, with blood samples drawn voluntarily from students and the unmarked vials "placed in a big tub so everybody would know it was completely anonymous," says Brown.

Koop's plan, however, raised eyebrows among epidemiologists, particularly at the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, which has its own ideas about testing college students for the prevalence of the AIDS virus. Unlike Koop's plan, which calls for a survey at a single university in a big city, the CDC wants to test students at 10 to 12 universities which would be spread across the country in urban and rural settings, thus giving the study a more representative sampling. "We think that it's important to get geographic diversity," says Helene Gayle of CDC.



Koop proposed AIDS testing on one campus.

Koop's plan also calls for students to voluntarily roll up their sleeves and give blood. Some epidemiologists worry that such an approach could result in a biased sample, since it would be almost impossible to get every student to participate. "It could be biased either way," explains Gayle. Either the students with risk factors, such as illicit drug use or homosexuality, would avoid the survey, or students with risk factors might give blood, anxious to see what the results would be.

CDC is proposing to take random blood samples from a number of colleges some time in the next year, says James Curran, head of the AIDS program at CDC. The samples, which would be unidentified, would be collected from students who give blood at their student health clinics for reasons unrelated to AIDS. ■ W.B.

AIDS Pamphlet to Be Mailed

It appears that the federal government may at last be ready to mail a brochure about AIDS to every household in America. The little pamphlet in its various incarnations has been the subject of intense political debate for more than a year and its journey through the system can almost be described in ulyssean terms (*Science*, 18 September 1987, p. 1410). But on 27 January, Assistant Secretary of Health Robert E. Windom told the audience at a recent World Health Organization conference on AIDS in London that the booklet would finally be sent, perhaps by late June. Congress has twice earmarked funds for the mass mailing.

Windom did not provide details on what the brochure would say about AIDS. A pamphlet that was almost mailed in October by the federal Centers for Disease Control, and one likely to serve at least as a prototype for the summer mailing, offered basic information about AIDS while stressing themes familiar to the Reagan Administration, such as saying "no" to drugs and the importance of sexual abstinence outside marriage.

In an attempt to figure out what Americans know about AIDS, the National Center for Health Statistics has been quizzing about 1000 adult Americans each week on their knowledge and attitudes about the disease. The preliminary results released in November show that the level of misunderstanding is high. For example, 25% thought it "likely" that a person can get AIDS from donating blood; 38% thought AIDS can be transmitted by mosquitoes; and 31% believed that a person could get AIDS from public toilets. ■ W.B.