

Briefing:

SSC Site Pick Delayed

The Department of Energy (DOE) is delaying selection of its preferred site for the Superconducting Super Collider to next fall. The department says it needs more time to evaluate the seven remaining site proposals and to consider public comments on the sites.

The preferred site was slated to be chosen in July, preceding the publication of a general, draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the \$5.3-billion project. The SSC site will not be announced until after the comment period on the EIS closes in October. Barring complications with the final EIS, the location that is identified this fall will likely be the final site announced in January 1989.

Meanwhile, the heads of 49 physics departments from a diversified group of U.S. colleges and universities have urged Congress to fund the SSC. The action came on 20 February at the Physics Chair Conference in Arlington, Virginia. ■ M.C.

APA Likely to Sell *Psychology Today*

The adverse advertising market that has caused a mass die-off of popular scientific magazines in recent years is likely to force the American Psychological Association to sell *Psychology Today*. The association is currently considering three offers to buy the magazine, including one from Family Media, the group that bought Time Inc.'s *Discover*. (Time had bought the AAAS's now defunct *Science 86*.) A decision is likely to be reached by late March, according to APA chief executive officer Leonard Goodstein.

The magazine, purchased 5 years ago for \$3 million, has cost the association a total of \$15 million, says Goodstein. It has never sat happily at APA. Goodstein says the board did not know what it was getting into when it took on *Psychology Today* and that it is now clear that the values of a professional membership association and a commercial magazine venture are not particularly compatible. The magazine has also been subjected to severe criticism by members for accepting liquor and cigarette advertising. Ironically, advertising cutbacks by the tobacco industry have been a major contributor to the magazine's financial woes.

Another publication, *The Scientist*, has also been suffering from a lack of advertising. The 18-month-old biweekly tabloid for scientists is moving its editorial offices from Washington to Philadelphia where its pub-

lisher Eugene Garfield heads the Institute for Scientific Information. Garfield says the newspaper is being redesigned and that the financial picture has brightened since the business staff was reorganized and moved from New York to Philadelphia last summer. ■ C.H.

Howard Hughes Establishes Unit at MIT

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), as part of its plan to branch out beyond medical schools, has given the Massachusetts Institute of Technology \$15 million towards construction of a new building that will eventually house Hughes researchers.

In addition, HHMI has named three MIT faculty members to positions as Hughes investigators, whose research will now be supported with Hughes' funds. Susumu Tonegawa, who won a Nobel Prize in 1987, will get Hughes backing for his work in immunology. The other two new Hughes stars are geneticist Robert Horvitz, and molecular biologist Richard O. Hynes.

For years, HHMI had been bound for legal reasons to limit its research centers to universities that have a medical school. However, as a result of recent negotiations with the Internal Revenue Service, Hughes is now free to expand its reach to places like MIT that have strong programs in biology even if they do not have a school of medicine. The total Hughes investment in research in its MIT unit over the next 5 years is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$13 million. ■ B.J.C.

Ukrainian Scientists Protest Nuclear Plans

A major rethink of current plans for the expansion of nuclear power in the Ukraine has been demanded by a group of members of the Ukrainian Academy of Science. They claim that under proposals put forward by the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Atomic Power, large concentrations of reactors would be constructed too close to major population centers, and argue that not enough is known about the potential dangers of seismic activity in the region.

At present, the ministry is planning to build six new 1000-megawatt reactors in the Ukraine, each of which would be based at one of the existing seven nuclear power stations in the republic. In some cases, the result would be a group of reactors on a single site producing up to 6000 megawatts of electricity.

The scientists, writing in the 21 January

issue of a Kiev-based magazine *Literaturna Ukrayina*, say that the problems involved in reliably operating a station of this size "have not been totally solved." They add that a review carried out by various institutes of the U.S.S.R. and Ukrainian Academies of Science had reached the conclusion that no nuclear power stations exceeding a total output of 4000 megawatts should be built.

They also claim that "Data have been obtained which indicate the likelihood of dangerous geological processes in areas adjacent to existing and planned nuclear power stations," the scientists write.

Their warning has coincided with a decision of the Council of Ministers to cancel the construction of a nuclear power station in Krasnodar in the northern Caucasus, a known earthquake zone. According to a report in *Pravda*, the decision was taken "because of the likelihood of seismic activity and inadequate scientific investigation at the design stage." The report also says that the public in the area had raised questions about whether the precautions being taken against earthquakes were adequate, "but until the Chernobyl disaster, the relevant department took little notice." ■ D.D.

Somalis Escape Execution

Eight Somali political prisoners, including two scientists, who were condemned to death in early February, have been reprieved following appeals from scientists and politicians from the United States and Europe. According to the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academy of Sciences, which has been following the cases, two of the condemned, former members of the Somali parliament, have been released and put under house arrest. The other six, including mathematician Ismail Abdi Yonis and engineer Suleiman Nuh Ali, have had their sentences commuted to 24 years. Efforts are continuing to obtain their release, along with eight other Somali scientists who have been imprisoned since 1982. ■ C.H.

NAS Opens Japan Office

The head of the new Office of Japan Affairs at the National Research Council is Martha Caldwell Harris, a Japan expert from the Office of Technology Assessment. Harris, who assumed her post on 22 February, has written widely on Japan, technology transfer, and industrial competitiveness during her 7 years at OTA. She is fluent in Japanese and has lived in Japan for 4 years. ■ M.S.