Briefing:

Du Pont Backs Phaseout of CFCs

The largest manufacturer of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's), the Du Pont Company, is calling for a worldwide phaseout of the compounds by the year 2000. Du Pont's statement, made on 25 March, comes on the heels of a report by the Ozone Trends Panel of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which provided additional evidence that the man-made chemicals are destroying the stratospheric ozone layer (*Science*, 25 March, p. 1489).

The compounds were invented by Du Pont in the 1930s and are widely used for applications such as refrigeration, air conditioning, manufacturing foam products, and cleaning electronic devices.

Until now, Du Pont and other chemical companies that manufacture the compounds have only been willing to support a 50% reduction in CFCs. They have argued that scientific evidence was not strong enough to warrant a total ban. A treaty requiring most nations to reduce CFC use by that amount has been drafted by the United Nations Environment Program and is awaiting ratification by at least 23 countries (*Science*, 25 September, p. 1557).

In its statement, the company urged other nations to "treat the new scientific information seriously" and to act cooperatively to eliminate the use of the compounds. Lee M. Thomas, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, applauded Du Pont's actions, stating that it would spur governments around the world to move quickly to adopt the treaty.

Du Pont and other manufacturers of CFCs are developing substitutes. Du Pont has identified one compound known as 134a, which appears to be a substitute for refrigerants in automobile air conditioners and for foam blowing. The company says it should be possible to phaseout use of CFCs in an orderly way. ■ **M.C.**

Wilson to Leave Cornell

Kenneth G. Wilson, 1982 Nobel laureate in physics and director of Cornell University's new Theory Center, has announced that he will be leaving Cornell this summer for Ohio State University.

Wilson has long been a champion of the use of supercomputers in science, and played a prominent role in persuading Congress to fund the National Science Foundation's national supercomputer centers, which were inaugurated in 1985. There are now five such centers, including the one started by Wilson at Cornell.

Because of the federal budget deficit, the supercomputer centers have not been funded at the rates originally promised, a circumstance that Wilson has criticized vigorously. "We've come to a certain level of funding from NSF," he told *Science*, "we've gotten two machines from IBM, and we've had major money from the state of New York. But now we have to move on, to upgrade our machines and software to stay level with technological advancements. We can't wait."

Nonetheless, Wilson insists that he is basically pleased with the Cornell center, particularly its recent partnership with IBM for advanced computer architecture development. He says that his reasons for leaving have nothing to do with policy matters and everything to do with the dynamics of a two-career marriage: Alison A. Brown, the Theory Center's associate director for advanced computing and networking, and Wilson's wife, is herself leaving Cornell to become associate director of the new Ohio Supercomputer Center and associate director for research computing at Ohio State.

"It's a dream job for her," says Wilson. "And I knew I was going to go back to research soon enough anyway. My basic commitment was to get the Theory Center off the ground. As I told people here, I've been spending my time to give other people access to supercomputers. Now it's my turn." ■ **M.M.W.**

Ecstasy Returns to Schedule I

After a 6-month hiatus in its legal life, the designer drug known as "ecstasy" is again back on the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) list of substances that cannot legally be used for either recreational or medical purposes, unless the Food and Drug Administration specifically grants permission for the latter. Ecstasy or MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) has been a focus of controversy because of its increasing use among college students, recent scientific findings that the drug may damage certain nerve cells in the brain, and disagreement within the psychiatric community as to whether it has any value in psychotherapy (*Science*, 19 February, p. 864).

The DEA first listed ecstasy as a Schedule I hallucinogenic controlled substance—its most restrictive category—on an emergency basis in 1985, and on a permanent basis in 1986, because it determined that while the drug has a high potential for abuse, it has no currently accepted medical use and has not been shown to be safe under medical supervision.

The drug was removed from Schedule I last September by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston, which ruled on technical grounds in favor of a petition filed in January 1987 by Harvard psychiatrist Lester Grinspoon, who would like to see ecstasy and other similar drugs be available for experimental research in psychiatry. "This could be an important area of study in psychiatry," he says.

Last week, DEA ruled that it will, for the second time, "permanently" list ecstasy, as a Schedule I compound. To meet provisions in the court's ruling, the DEA has redefined its criteria for establishing that ecstasy has no accepted medical use and that its safety has not been demonstrated. The agency's new action relies on evidence presented at its 1985 and 1986 hearings on ecstasy and on its survey of the scientific literature, which failed to identify any published information about the therapeutic benefits of the drug. ■ **D.M.B.**

Italy Back in Space

After a break of 13 years, Italy has—with the help of the United States— successfully restarted its domestic space program with the successful launch last Friday of a research satellite, San Marco D/L, from an Italian-built launch pad in the Indian Ocean, 3 miles off the coast of Kenya.

The satellite was placed in orbit by a four-stage National Aeronautics and Space Administration/LTV Scout rocket. In addition to an Italian experiment designed to measure atmospheric drag, the satellite also carried three U.S. experiments—two of which were put together at the Goddard Space Flight center—and West German solar spectrometer.

The last launch from the Italian base, which was opened in 1963, took place in 1975, after which the government had expressed its doubts about pursuing purely national efforts, and decided to allocate most of its space funding to multilateral projects organized through the European Space Agency.

Italy is now the third largest contributor to the ESA budget, and will, for example, be providing 15% of the costs of the new launcher Ariane V, and 25% of the costs of Columbus, Europe's contribution to the international space station. However, research minister Antonio Ruberti said that a strong domestic program is also necessary "in order to avoid finding our industry, towards the year 2000, lagging heavily behind that of France and West Germany." ■ **D.D.**