Another Congressional Look at Fraud

If issues in science can be said to enjoy fads like popular fashion, it is fair to say that scientific conduct (or, more precisely misconduct) is the issue of the day.

Now, Representative Robert A. Roe (D–NJ) is turning his attention to misconduct with hearings that will have concluded just as this issue of *Science* goes to press. Unlike his House colleague John Dingell (D–MI), who focused on the by now famous paper by Nobel laureate David Baltimore and Tereza Imanishi-Kari (*Science*, 12 May, p. 643), Roe's hearings have been designed to take a generic look at the big picture.

The hearings signal an attempt by Roe, chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, to reclaim the preeminence it had on this issue in the early 1980s when it held the first congressional hearings on scientific fraud (*Science*, 24 April 1981, p. 421). Those were the hearings at which the late Philip Handler, then president of the National Academy of Sciences, declared that the instance of fraud in science is "grossly exaggerated" and what there is should be handled internally.

The first point is still hotly debated, but Handler's wish that science might be left to its own devices to deal with this issue seems increasingly to have been wishful thinking. Indeed, one of the concerns of the Roe hearings will be efforts by Dingell and others to legislate this aspect of science.

Although no formal bill has been introduced in the House, Dingell staffers have been privately circulating a draft of legislation they hope to offer sometime during this congressional session. To many, it seems ironic that the very committee that argues for "free and open debate" of scientific disputes is trying to keep its draft tightly held, leaving observers to speculate that it contains draconian provisions.

In fact, it is a mixed bag. *Science* has learned that the draft of the Dingell document contains provisions that:

- Transfer some oversight authority from the NIH's fraud office to the office of the assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Call upon scientific journals to devise guidelines for detecting fraudulent papers.
- Call for guidelines on scientific authorship—who is an author and who is not.
- Require development of rules regarding conflict-of-interest in scientific research.
- Establish limited immunity from libel for whistle-blowers who act in good faith and for faculty or NIH committees duly constituted to investigate allegations of wrongdoing.

With this as backdrop, witnesses at the Roe hearings will be commenting indirectly on the potential legislation.

The acting head of the new, improved fraud office at the National Institutes of Health (officially designated the Office of Scientific Integrity) will testify on NIH's plans for conducting future investigations better than it has in the past.

A panel of educators will discuss whether ethics can or should be taught as a separate course to budding scientists.

People who have dealt with fraud either as whistle-blowers or faculty investigators will talk about their experiences, no doubt echoing remarks they have made already at one of the dozen or so "integrity" workshops and meetings that dot the academic landscape.

Finally, journal editors, including Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., from *Science* and John Maddox from *Nature* will be asked what scientific publications ought to be doing to weed out scientific fraud.

Science will report next week.

■ BARBARA J. CULLITON

Sun Dagger Misses Its Mark

Anna Sofaer

If the Anasazi Indians were indeed capable of constructing a "timepiece" 1000 years ago that produces unique patterns of light at the solstices, equinoxes, and lunar standstills, there is now a need for a "watchmaker" to effect repairs. In 1977, artist Anna Sofaer noticed that three huge stone slabs abutting Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, generated a "sun dagger" on two spiral petroglyphs carved into the rock of the butte (*Science*, 19 October 1979, p. 283). But where once the dagger bisected the larger spiral at the summer solstice, now it has widened and shifted to the left of center. The altered pattern was first noticed last week by Sofaer's collaborators Rolf Sinclair and Phillip Johnson.

The site has been controversial since it was discovered. Some believe that the rock formation is simply a matter of chance. But Sofaer and her colleagues have argued that it is too unlikely that rocks would cast a shadow marking many seasonal events: distinct dagger patterns appear at the winter solstices and equinoxes, and there are shadows cast by the moon that mark major and minor lunar standstills during an 18.6-year cycle of lunar motion. But skeptics will doubtless note the irony that after some 1000 years of accurate patterns, the rocks shifted their position barely a decade after they were discovered. Sofaer responds that it is a sad quirk of fate that the rocks should have moved now; heavy rains and renewed interest from humans may have accelerated the deterioration of the site.

■ JOSEPH PALCA

19 Say No to NIH Job

So far, at least 19 of the people who have been sounded out as potential candidates to be the new director of NIH have said they are not interested in the job. The search for a replacement for James B. Wyngaarden, who leaves on 1 August, is being conducted by a committee headed by assistant secretary for health James O. Mason. There is an illusion that a candidate's view on abortion will not be a major factor in the selection, but at least one of those approached said "no" because he has taken a public stand as a pro-choice advocate.

■ B.J.C.