

seem to have come out of the blue. Further, with the exception of the Bridges *v.* Alvarez accounts, there are no eye witnesses to any frog experiments in May and June. Nor, NIH claims, is there evidence that Bridges intended to follow up the discovery.

But perhaps most important to the NIH panel's thinking is evidence that Bridges lacked the necessary laboratory chemicals to do in May what he said he did. The frog experiments claimed by Bridges require the use of tritiated retinol or vitamin A. Records show that Bridges received a shipment in January 1986 which, the NIH experts believe, would not have been sufficient for the early experiments because some of the tritiated material is used up during purification procedures that are needed as the substance ages. The next shipments, according to records obtained from the manufacturer, arrived in August. Furthermore, the August shipment of tritiated retinol was less radioactive than the earlier one. The level of radioactivity reported for the frog experiments in the *Science* paper is consistent with the August shipment.

This is another point with which Bridges takes issue. He refers to a statement in the second of his two rebuttals, claiming successful research has been done with tritiated vitamin A that was 2 years old.

But NIH's panel was not persuaded.

And so, the NIH conclusion was reached—Bridges not only had the opportunity to plagiarize Rando's experimental protocol but that opportunity was "realized."

For now, Bridges' career is very much up in the air. Purdue University dean Kenneth Klierer told *Science* that he "knew that there had been trouble at Baylor before David came here, but we thought it was just a priority dispute. Since Rando published first, it seemed like an exercise in futility. Since he's been at Purdue, David has been a first-class person, good with graduate students, good on faculty committees."

Klierer has empaneled a special committee of senior Purdue faculty to advise him. Meanwhile, he is waiting.

And Bridges is preparing yet another response to NIH. He and his lawyer will argue that a lack of due process precluded them from knowing all of the allegations as the NIH panel was moving along and responding completely to all of the evidence. "If I had gone out into the street and murdered someone in full view of 50 people, I would be accorded more safeguards than I got from NIH," Bridges contends.

NIH stands pat and is, in any case, now out of the loop. The next chapter in this sad tale will come when Bridges' appeal is heard during the debarment proceedings.

■ BARBARA J. CULLITON

Dahlem Conferences Face Ax

U.S. researchers, accustomed to a laissez-faire style of scientific meetings, often balk at first at the rigid format of the Dahlem conferences—week-long, interdisciplinary workshops held four times a year in West Berlin. But within a few days of each workshop's opening, even the most resistant participant is usually seduced by the unique character of these workshops. "As a result, there is an ever-swelling band worldwide of Dahlem loyalists, veterans of an extraordinarily successful approach to scientific communication and discussion," says Berkeley molecular biologist Gunther Stent.

But just when everyone was loving them, political wranglings in West Berlin are threatening to shut down the Dahlem Konferenzen. "The Stifterverband, a group of industrial donors that has supported Dahlem since the beginning, has given notice of termination to the entire staff, as of 31 December 1989," says conference director Silke Bernhard. "It might be possible eventually to arrange for another organization to sponsor Dahlem, but that will take time and continuity will be lost. My staff are already leaving or looking for new positions."

Conceived 15 years ago by Bernhard, the conferences have 48 attendees, and some are required to produce a discussion paper beforehand. The participants are split into four working groups, each of which produces a report on one aspect of the overall topic. This strict formula, paradoxically, produces an extremely free exchange and generation of ideas. The conferences have been supported by Stifterverband well beyond its usual pattern of 3-year support. "We did it because they were so good," says Stifterverband's chief executive, Hans-Hennig Pistor. But, he added, "we can't finance a project forever." Bernhard accepts this reasoning, but complains that in withdrawing its support, "Stifterverband was more concerned with politics than the future of the conferences."

The Stifterverband decided late in 1986 to end its support for Dahlem Konferenzen and the following year proposed that it be absorbed by the newly established Berlin Academy of Sciences. For 2 years Pistor and his colleagues at Stifterverband tried to get agreement of the transfer from Dahlem's advisory committee and its director, Bernhard. "I was concerned that Dahlem Konferenzen would lose its autonomy if it became part of the academy," says Bernhard.

In spite of threats that she would be fired if she did not sign a "letter of understanding" that was necessary for the transfer to be effected, Bernhard withheld her consent and explained her position at a meeting of Dahlem's advisory board on 6 December last year.

This recalcitrance prompted Pistor to comment later that "only the negative attitude of Dr. Bernhard stood in the way of a solution of the question of a takeover [by the academy]." Sir Gordon Wolstenholme of the Royal College of Physicians, London, and a member of Dahlem Konferenzen's advisory board, objected: "This was not a *negative* attitude but a correctly *positive* one on behalf of the integrity of the program of Dahlem Konferenzen."

The question of the takeover by the Berlin Academy became academic this spring: the newly elected West Berlin Senate, now dominated by a coalition of the Social Democratic and "Green" parties, disbanded the academy, declaring that it had been established undemocratically by the now ousted Christian Democrats. The new Senate has offered financial support for Dahlem, but Pistor told the advisory committee that he doubts it will "fulfill the pledges made concerning the financing of Dahlem Konferenzen." The Stifterverband is "compelled to give up the Dahlem Konferenzen as of 31 December 1989," added Pistor.

"The Stifterverband is deliberately not seeking a new sponsor as an act of political revenge," charges Bernhard. "First they tried to use me as a scapegoat, and now they are using the new Senate. The financial support is there, if they really wanted Dahlem to go on."

The new Senate may in fact come to Dahlem's rescue, as it recently asked the Free University of Berlin to explore the possibility of taking part in sponsorship. Wolf Singer, president of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research, Frankfurt, told *Science* that the institutes might also become involved: "The law requires seven sponsoring organizations," says Singer. "I think it might be possible to achieve this, but it will take time. I hope it won't be too late."

■ ROGER LEWIN

Information for this article was provided by Don Kirk, a free-lance writer based in Bonn.