

Zs For Two: A Critical Mass

As physicists continue their global race to reveal the secrets of the Z particle, one of the pillars of unified field theory, tempers are getting frayed. On 19 July researchers at Chicago's Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory proclaimed via press release that they had surged into the lead by achieving "the most precise measurement" of the Z mass yet: 90.9 ± 0.35 billion electron volts (GeV).

Foul, cried Fermilab's West Coast rivals at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC). "They were deliberately trying to scoop what they knew [would be] a superior result," said SLAC spokesman Michael Riordan in the heat of the moment. According to Riordan, the Fermilab team was well aware that at a SLAC summer workshop on 21 July, the experimenters working at the Stanford Linear Collider were scheduled to present an even more precise result: 91.11 ± 0.23 GeV.

And using a press release to announce results rubbed people the wrong way, said SLAC director Burton Richter, who fired off a letter of protest to Fermilab's new director John Peoples. "I would prefer to do things the normal way, through conferences and publications," Richter told *Science*.

But Peoples isn't apologizing. "So much money has been spent on these experiments

by the American taxpayer that when an important result comes out, it's almost an obligation to let people know," he says.

The University of Chicago's Melvin Shochet, a spokesman for the Fermilab experimental group, took exception to SLAC's accusation of "publication by press release."

"We sent our article to *Physical Review Letters* first," he says. On the day it arrived at that journal, moreover, the group gave a detailed seminar on the experiment—at that same SLAC summer workshop—and distributed copies of the paper to everyone who wanted it. "The whole thing got blown up out of proportion," he says.

Indeed it was. The feelings on both sides simmered down almost as fast as they flared up. And yet in retrospect, say the physicists contacted by *Science*, the incident illuminates the deep undercurrent of anxiety at both laboratories. Budgets are tight and, as Richter points out, if the \$6-billion Superconducting Super Collider really goes forward, "everybody is nervous about what it is going to do to the rest of the [high-energy physics] program."

SLAC, most notably, is at least a year late with its linear collider, a highly experimental machine using electrons and positrons to create, what Richter promoted as a "Z Fac-

tory." It is working now: some 150 Zs have been produced since April. But the laboratory badly needs to restore some of its credibility by skimming the cream of the Z physics—before the Europeans can weigh in with the enormous machine known as LEP, which is still on schedule to start making Zs in quantity this August. So it hurt to have Fermilab beat them, even temporarily.

Fermilab, meanwhile, is fighting a widespread perception in the physics community that proton-antiproton machines such as Fermilab's Tevatron are about as useful as a sledgehammer when it comes to doing high-precision experiments. "We were up on cloud nine" with the Z mass result, says Shochet, "not just because we were first, but because we got such accuracy"—better than the experimenters themselves expected.

■ M. MITCHELL WALDROP

Headed for NOAA's Choppy Waters

President Bush has nominated academic administrator and oceanographer John A. Knauss to head the chronically underfunded National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For 25 years, Knauss, 63, was Dean of the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanogra-



John A. Knauss

phy, where he oversaw its growth from a small coastal laboratory to a major research and teaching institution. In 1987, he stepped down to resume his research in physical oceanography.

But now he has been lured away from his lab, all the way to Washington, where he has served on numerous governmental panels including the one that led to the formation of NOAA in 1970. Why leave the pleasures of academia beside Narragansett Bay? "NOAA is a big, exciting organization," says Knauss. "In an era in which more and more people are worried about global change, it has the primary responsibility for measuring and predicting it." And what of NOAA's chronic funding problems? "I don't know if I can turn that around," he says, "but I'm sure going to try."

Knauss's Senate confirmation hearing may not make it onto this session's calendar, but he is expected to face little opposition when it finally is held. ■ R.A.K.

Gallo Associate Subject to Investigation

A member of Robert C. Gallo's AIDS research team at the National Cancer Institute is being investigated for possibly violating federal conflict-of-interest laws in connection with the award of contracts to a company where his wife worked.

Syed Zaki Salahuddin, a technician who has worked with Gallo for about 10 years, allegedly recommended that Gallo's lab at the National Cancer Institute do business with Pan Data Systems, Inc., without disclosing that his wife, Firoza Salahuddin, was a founder and director of the Rockville, Maryland, biomedical research firm.

Both Salahuddin and federal health officials have declined to comment on the case, which was first reported in the *Washington Business Journal*. Salahuddin's lawyer, Seymour Glanzer, said he is "unaware of the existence of any government investigation into any purported wrongdoing by Mr. Salahuddin."

Contacted by *Science*, Gallo also said neither he nor Salahuddin had been contacted by any federal investigator. And Gallo said that Salahuddin has never had any financial

connection with Pan Data. But Gallo recalls learning several years ago that Salahuddin's wife worked for Pan Data and says he told his technician: "I don't know if it's right or wrong, but I know it's stupid." Mrs. Salahuddin promptly resigned from the company, Gallo asserts, adding that he was astonished and outraged that the case has aroused any outside interest. "He's not a big fellow. This is not a big deal," says Gallo.

Gallo characterized Salahuddin as a hardworking, "totally dedicated" individual who "may be the best in the world at culturing blood cells." Salahuddin is a co-discoverer with Gallo of the HBLV—a B-cell virus—and has been involved in key work on the AIDS virus, HIV.

The General Accounting Office reportedly began an investigation last March which subsequently was taken over by the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services. Earlier this month the GAO informed the office of Representative John D. Dingell (D-MI), chairman of the House investigations subcommittee, that a grand jury investigation had begun. ■ C.H.