

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Will Cajun Cuisine Include Super Pork?

Last year, Senator J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA) was expressing grave concern about the cost of the \$6-billion Superconducting Super Collider. But this year, Johnston, chairman of the Appropriations Committee's energy subcommittee, changed his mind. In July he pushed through a spending bill that could funnel \$225 million into the mega project in fiscal year 1990.

Maybe it's just dumb luck, but less than a month after the Senate action, General Dynamics Corporation announced that it plans to set up a factory in Hammond, Louisiana, to build SSC magnets. Some 300 to 600 jobs would be created in the area, which lies 50 miles north of New Orleans.

The announcement has angered at least a few executive branch officials, who fear that the Super Collider will turn into a giant pork barrel. Aides to Johnston say there is no connection between General Dynamics' plan and the senator's surge of generosity.

Irvine Center to Assess Toxicity

Battles over toxic chemicals will soon have a new mediator in the Irvine-based Institute for Evaluating Health Risks. The institute was created in response to California's new anti-toxics law, Proposition 65, which makes industry responsible for certifying the safety of chemicals it manufactures.

The IEHR was founded by Chuck Powers, whose previous projects include an institute that evaluates health risks from auto emissions. Jack Moore, former chief of toxics and pesticides at the EPA, is president. The main financial support is expected to come from founda-

tions and industry groups, who have already contributed \$600,000 in start-up money.

The institute's primary chore will be to scrutinize current risk assessment models, some of which may need to be scrapped in light of new information, says Moore. Ad hoc committees of scientists will be set up to do risk evaluations. With its high-powered president and board of directors, including Stanford president and former FDA chief Donald Kennedy, Powers expects the institute to have high credibility. It will be "beholden to no one," says Moore.

Irvine, meanwhile, is taking independent action to stave off the greenhouse effect. The city council in July passed an ordinance banning the manufacture, sale, or distribution of products containing ozone-depleting compounds (ODCs). The measure, to take effect next July, covers a variety of compounds used both in products and packaging. University research programs are exempted from the new law, as are companies making military or medical products where ODCs must be used to meet government regulations.

Grant Lockout Looms for ARCO Solar

ARCO Solar, the United States' largest producer of photovoltaic cells, may no longer be able to receive federal research grants. The company's U.S. competitors and some federal officials say the federal spigot should be turned off for ARCO now that the company is being taken over by a West German industrial giant, Siemens GmbH.

Their view is that such awards could violate federal procurement laws. Robert Annan of the Department of Energy says the purpose of photovoltaics grants is to enhance the industrial competitiveness in the United States, not to subsidize foreign competitors.

In fact, U.S. industry execu-

tives and federal officials are so worried that Siemens may walk away with cutting edge technology to produce high-power solar cells, they're speculating that the sale of ARCO Solar will be blocked by the Commerce Department. Officials there say only that the sale will most likely have to be subjected to approval by a federal panel, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

New Global Climate Study Centers

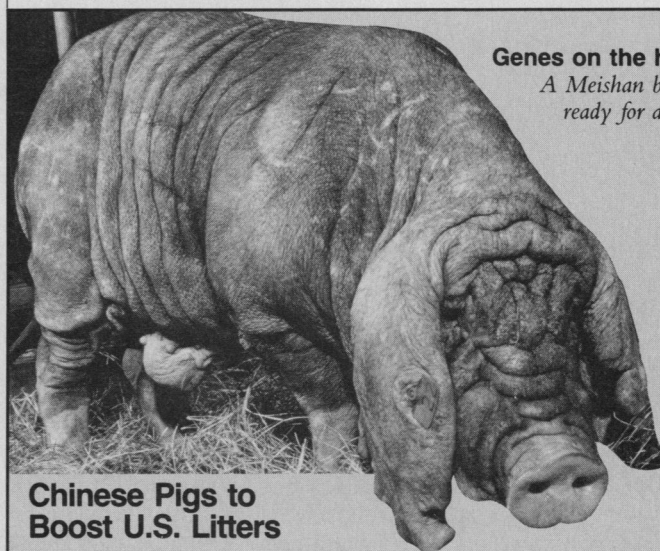
The University of Maryland at College Park is starting up a new center to study global warming with a 2-year grant of \$1.8 million from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Headed by environmental lawyer Alan Miller, the Center for Global Change will combine research with policy analysis and education, including ex-

plorations of how to promote economic growth while minimizing damage to the ozone layer. The founders, including botanist Alan Teramura and geographer Stephen Leatherman of the University of Maryland, say this is the first multidisciplinary university-based center that is uniquely targeted to greenhouse problems.

The government is also establishing a new Center for Global Environmental Studies at the Energy Department's Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Directed by Robert I. Van Hook of the Environmental Sciences Division, the center will expand Oak Ridge's research program to explore such global warming issues as the role of deforestation on long-term climate changes.

Collaborative partnership agreements are already in place with several research universities and other research centers around the country.



Genes on the hoof.
A Meishan boar is ready for action.

Chinese Pigs to Boost U.S. Litters

The country's newest animal immigrants—140 pigs recently arrived from China—are not going to win any beauty prizes. They look like a cross between a Shar-Pei dog and a dwarf hippopotamus. But they may win a prize for fecundity, and that is what makes them attractive to animal breeders.

The Chinese pigs, noted for their early sexual maturity, average 16 to 20 piglets in a litter, compared to 10 to 12 produced

by the average American sow. The Oriental porkers may also be harder and more disease-resistant, and better at thriving on high-roughage diets. Breeders hope to introduce these traits into U.S. strains without affecting the quality of their meat.

The new arrivals, after spending 4 months in quarantine in Florida, are being shipped to breeding centers in Nebraska, Illinois, and Iowa.

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