Briefings

edited by MARK H. CRAWFORD

GYRO Experiment Findings Nixed

In December Hideo Hayasaka and Sakae Takeuchi of Tohuku University in Japan surprised physicists around the world when they reported that gyroscopes spinning clockwise—but not counterclockwise—appear to grow lighter in relation to their rate of spin (*Science*, 12 January, p. 156). Now two French physicists are charging that the Japanese findings, which were reported in *Physical Review Letters*, are in error.

In a report appearing in the 21 February issue of *Nature*, T. J. Quinn and A. Picard of the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures in Paris say their own measurements show no significant changes in gyroscope weight after corrections are made for temperature effects associated with rotation.

Funds Flow to HUGO

HUGO, the international Human Genome Organisation, has landed its first big grant: $350,000 for 1990 from the Wellcome Trust in London, with promises of slightly less to come in each of the following 2 years. HUGO was created a couple of years ago to further international collaboration on the genome project. The Wellcome Trust money will go to support HUGO's European office now being set up in London.

Prospects also look good for a $1-million grant, spread over 4 years, from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to support HUGO's Americas office in Bethesda, Maryland. The Hughes trustees will decide in April.

The new infusion of funds is a needed shot in the arm for the organization, which has been languishing with a bare bones budget and no clear direction. The biggest supporter to date has been the Hughes Institute, which contributed $100,000 in services in 1989. Otherwise, HUGO has subsisted on small grants, totaling $51,000 in 1989. Efforts continue to raise private funds in Japan, the proposed site of the organization's Pacific office, but fundraising there has been slow.

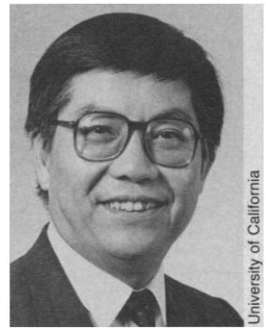
The eventual plan, say HUGO officials, is to obtain support from various governments interested in mapping and sequencing the human genome. Meanwhile, HUGO officials have decided that much of their focus will be to bring together all the groups working on a specific chromosome to see that research is coordinated and materials are exchanged.

Wyngaarden to NAS

James B. Wyngaarden, the associate director of life sciences at the Office of Science and Technology and former director of the National Institutes of Health, is planning to leave the White House agency at the end of June. Wyngaarden, who joined the science policy shop only last June, will move in July to the National Academy of Sciences where he has been elected to serve as the organization's foreign secretary.

Asian-American to Lead Berkeley

Chang-Lin Tien, currently executive vice chancellor at the University of California, Irvine, has been tapped to head UC's Berkeley branch. Tien's appointment as chancellor is thought to mark the first time that an Asian-American has had the opportunity to run a major U.S. research institution.



Chang-Lin Tien

Tien has had a long experience with Berkeley, serving there for more than 30 years as a professor of mechanical engineering and then as vice chancellor for research before moving to Irvine in 1988. He returns to take charge of the Berkeley campus at a time when the institution is trying to deal with thorny charges of bias in its admission policies—a matter now under investigation by the U.S. Department of Education.

At issue is possible discrimination against Asian-Americans (*Science*, 18 August 1989, p. 694) in favor of white students and counter charges of bias against whites who allegedly are passed over while blacks and Hispanics with weaker academic records gain admission to Berkeley. Tien's committment to encouraging racial diversity on campus and to strengthening undergraduate education is thought to be a major factor in his selection.

Indeed, Walter E. Hoadley, president of the alumni association, says the criteria included not just excellence in academic performance and proven management skills, but "the ability to stay on top of and manage the issues surrounding multiracial communities." David P. Gardner, president of the University of California, said Tien was the first choice of the Board of Regents. Tien will take over from chancellor Ira M. Heyman on 1 July.

Noli Me Tangere

Humans may thrive on physical contact—but plants don't. Certain plants do not grow as tall when they are touched daily as when they are left alone, according to researchers at Stanford University Medical Center, who say they have identified genes that may be responsible: a set of plant genes that are activated by touch.

Stunted plant. *Researcher Janet Braam (left) says touching* Arabidopsis *plants affects growth. The short plant was touched daily.*

Biochemist Janet Braam says the discovery was the serendipitous result of experiments in which a plant in the mustard family, *Arabidopsis*, was sprayed with hormones to see if that triggered any genes. It did. But so did spraying with water, cutting leaves with scissors, touching them, and simulating gusts of wind. "I finally worked out that it wasn't the hormone, it wasn't the water, it was just the touch," she says, according to a Stanford press release.

The researchers say it is unusual for organisms to have the capacity to alter their development. But organisms that can't move in response to environmental stresses may have that ability—witness the fact that coastal trees, which are exposed to a lot of wind and rain, are usually shorter and stockier than those inland.

Braam and biochemist Ronald Davis have found that "touch genes" encode proteins related to calmodulin, an intercellular calcium receptor. Since calcium ions carry signals from the environment into cells, they speculate that touch affects a plant's calcium levels. The discovery is reported in the 9 February issue of *Cell*.