Dingell: AIDS Researcher in Conflict

Representative John Dingell (D–MI) raked NIH officials over the coals in a congressional hearing last week for "a cavalier attitude toward improper and illegal behavior" in a case involving alleged financial conflict of interest.

The hearing, conducted by the House subcommittee on oversight and investigations, focused on the affairs of Syed Zaki Salahuddin, a long-time member of Robert C. Gallo's laboratory at the National Cancer Institute. According to testimony at the hearing, Salahuddin is being investigated because he and his wife allegedly have had a financial interest in a biotechnology company called Pan-Data that has done hundreds of thousands of dollars in business with Gallo's lab since the company was founded in 1984.

Salahuddin, who declined to testify before Dingell on Fifth Amendment grounds, has been suspended from NIH without pay, pending a criminal investigation by the U.S. attorney. He has appealed the suspension.

"The subcommittee's interest in this matter goes well beyond the criminal prosecution," Dingell stated at the hearings. The gut issue, as he sees it, lies in NIH's ability to tend to its own affairs.

The Salahuddin investigation comes at a time when NIH, spurred by Dingell, is conducting an extensive new inquiry into an old dispute over whether Gallo or Pasteur Institute virologist Luc Montagnier should get the credit for discovering the AIDS virus (*Science*, 30 March, p. 1532).

Concerns about Salahuddin's relationship with Pan-Data were first raised as early as 1985. Salahuddin, Gallo, and acting NIH director William Raub each has told *Science* that Gallo demanded an accounting. Or, as Raub put it, "Gallo screamed at him."

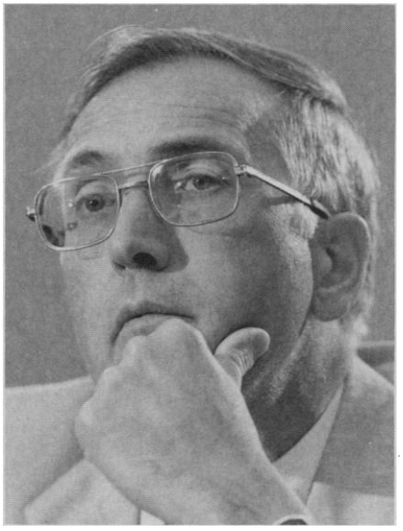
Salahuddin says he told Gallo that it was his wife, not he, who was connected to Pan-Data and that she would sever all ties to the company. Indeed, Raub testified that when Gallo's lab manager sought written assurance that there was no conflict, Pan-Data's president wrote in 1985 and again in 1986 that "Neither Mr. or Mrs. Salahuddin has any connection to this company. Neither have ever received, nor are they entitled to, any gratification in any form, monetary or otherwise." Apparently that was the end of it as far as Gallo's lab was concerned and the issue was not reported up the NIH chain of command.

Dingell staffers testified that Pan-Data's attorney gave the subcommittee a statement that both Zaki Salahuddin and his wife Firoza "resigned as directors" of the company on 1 August 1984. However, the staff went on to testify that they had information that the Salahuddins subsequently received remuneration from the company.

One colleague of Salahuddin's who attended the hearing said he was "outraged by its tone. Dingell convicted him on the spot." In fact, the full evidence is not expected to come out until the matter goes to court.

A second issue that caught Dingell's ire has to do with the way NIH does (or does not) keep track of its scientific equipment. During the past several months, cancer institute officials have been conducting an inventory of equipment in Gallo's lab, responding in part to the allegation that some of it has found its way to Pan-Data and that, in any case, no proper inventory had been conducted in the past 5 years. The finding: Numerous pieces of equipment valued collectively at $275,000 cannot be accounted for. On the other hand, Dingell's staff reported "overages—285 pieces of equipment that were not listed in inventory records but which were found in the laboratory."

Raub, noting that annual equipment inventories may be overlooked in many NIH labs and that equipment tends to "migrate" from lab to lab all over the campus, nevertheless acknowledges that "If we can't find a $5000 centrifuge, we can be perceived as lax." Dingell takes a harder view. "I am directing the subcommittee staff to continue its investigation to determine who at the NIH has knowledge of this improper activity and why the management system collapsed so catastrophically." Further hearings are expected.



No problem? *Acting NIH head William Raub said Gallo was told there was no conflict.*

■ BARBARA J. CULLITON

U.S. Math Still in Poor Health

Six years after the National Research Council issued a bleak prognosis for mathematics funding and education in the United States, a new study from the same source now reports that the health of math is—still the same. Mathematicians remain at or near the bottom of the heap according to measures such as research funding, drop-out rates, and fellowship support.

The new report was billed as the sequel to the so-called "David Report" of 1984, named after the panel's chairman, Edward E. David, Jr. But in many respects "David 2" sounded like the same study. The report—formally entitled "Renewing U.S. Mathematics: A Plan for the 1990s"—states bluntly that "the goals set in the 1984 report have not been achieved." Specifically, "almost no progress has been made" to provide funding for individual senior researchers whose ranks have increased by only 100 in 5 years (from 1800 in 1984 to 1900 in 1989). "A critical shortage of qualified mathematical science researchers still looms . . . and the academic foundations of the mathematical research enterprise are as shaky now as in 1984," the report says.

Why has so little been done? Surprisingly, the report doesn't hold federal funding agencies accountable. Instead, it lays the blame squarely at the door of universities, which did little to respond to the pleas made in the 1984 report for administrative and financial support. "While government has responded substantially to the 1984 report's recommendations," the report says, "universities generally have not."

The result of this neglect is detailed in the new report, and the numbers tell the story best. Although federal funding for mathematics has gone up by 34% in 5 years, little of that has gone to support research or improve teaching methods. Instead, almost all of the increase was spent on infrastructure to buy computers and rebuild deteriorating facilities.

Meanwhile, the number of mathematicians obtaining Ph.D.'s increased by only five a year, from 744 in 1980 to 749 in 1988. And while they were earning their graduate degrees, only 18% of those mathematicians received research fellowships to support their work. That compares with 58% in biology, 51% in physics, and 45% in engineering. "Why would a rational young person in science go into math?" asked one