for research faculty. Litster, however, points out that under MIT's proposal, 15 MIT and Boston-area faculty and about 46 visiting faculty would have been accommodated at the NHMFL after 1 year. He adds that the 81 permanent employees of the Bitter lab now have an average age of 47, and that only one MIT researcher will reach retirement age within the next 7 years without an immediately obvious successor.

■ **Serving the users.** Sanchez's memo states he is "satisfied" that users of the Bitter lab would be accommodated during the transition from MIT to Florida State. NSF is even willing to consider providing funds for users to take their experiments to the Grenoble magnet laboratory in France, he says. Yet in an open letter to the NSB, five members of MIT's Magnet Lab Users' Committee said the decision to locate the NHMFL at Florida State would have a "severe negative impact ('catastrophic' might be the proper word) on magnet lab users for many years." "Flying to Grenoble, that's ridiculous," says Bell Labs' Stormer. "If we don't have the high fields here, we might as well give up and do something else."

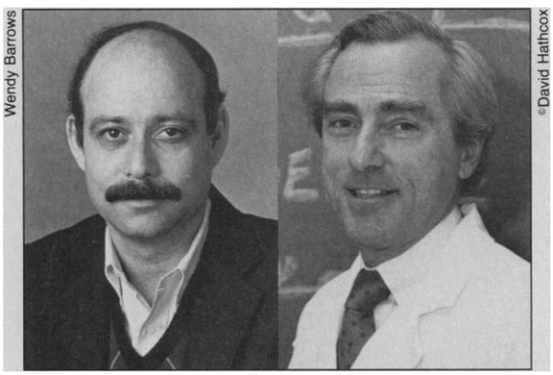
■ **International competitiveness.** Sanchez's memorandum states that MIT's selection "would result in increased interaction with international manufacturers rather than U.S. institutions." The same memorandum makes no mention of Florida State's intention "to rely initially on a collaboration with Grenoble to provide dc magnets," which are expected to make up a substantial fraction of NHMFL's instruments. Litster calls this "egregiously misleading."

In an interview with *Science*, Sanchez declined to answer Litster's charges point by point, because to do so would constitute a "pissing match" which is "not appropriate" for NSF. MIT, however, seems to have no such qualms. ■ **DAVID P. HAMILTON**

Genetic Privacy Makes Strange Bedfellows

W. French Anderson, gene therapy pioneer, and Jeremy Rifkin, anti-genetic engineering activist, may seem as unlikely a pairing as any scientist is likely to envision. And yet when John Conyers (D–MI) unveiled legislation last week to protect an individual's genetic information, Rifkin announced that he and Anderson were on the same team supporting the bill. In a bizarre coincidence, Rifkin's announcement came on the very day Anderson won final approval to begin his long-awaited, first-ever gene therapy trial (see p. 1372)—a trial that had been opposed by Rifkin. So Anderson isn't exaggerating when he says: "The fact that Jeremy and I agree on something tells you that it must be very important."

The bill, which will be formally introduced by Conyers, who is chairman of the Government Operations Committee, is designed to regulate the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of genetic information gathered from individuals by the federal government and its contractors and grantees. It would forbid agencies to release genetic information without the individual's written consent, except in the case of a medical emergency or a criminal investigation where probable cause or reasonable suspicion has been shown. The bill gives individuals the right to file a suit or an injunction against an agency that has released, or is intending to release, such information without permission. It also provides criminal penalties for unauthorized release.



In agreement. *Rifkin (left) opposed Anderson's work but got his support for privacy legislation.*

Anderson, who had planned to appear with Rifkin at a press conference unveiling the bill, was notably absent, however. At the last minute, the Department of Health and Human Services denied him permission to attend as a National Institutes of Health employee although he could have chosen to appear as a private individual. "The feeling was that I am so closely identified with NIH that my appearance could tend to damage the objectivity of NIH in the eyes of the public," Anderson told *Science*. Nevertheless, Anderson says he not only supports the concept of genetic privacy legislation but also Rifkin's approach. Anderson explained: "I strongly support the concept of this bill . . . because it will lead to public discussion of the serious ethical issues of genetic privacy."

Because the legislation applies just to government agencies and federally funded institutions, it only goes part of the way toward addressing what Rifkin and his supporters view as their biggest fear: that genetic information will be widely used to discriminate against individuals attempting to obtain employment, education, or insurance.

Paul Billings, chief of genetic medicine at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center in San Francisco and a supporter of the bill, has in fact already documented cases in which people with no apparent disability have been stigmatized because of the results of genetic tests. Billings, who is also a visiting scientist at the Human Genome Center at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, says, "I think that both the NIH and DOE have moved remarkably slowly in recognizing that genetic information has a history of abuse. And as the body of information expands, that problem is only going to get worse." Adds Billings: "One could argue, 'Why hasn't the Genome Project taken the lead on this privacy issue?' It does seem to reflect a kind of ambivalence on the part of the scientific community."

But Rifkin views the bill as just the first step in a new campaign. "I predict that we will see in this decade a genetic rights movement as potent and as powerful as the civil rights movement of the 1960s," he says. And he would like to see the legislation eventually broadened to include private employers and insurers who are already using or would like to use genetic screening. But that will be a tough fight. Even the limited bill announced by Rifkin and Conyers last week is expected to run into opposition: "We expect that some trade associations and industries will not be happy with this bill," says Rifkin. But political fights are Rifkin's forte, as his scientific opponents (and sometime supporters) know all too well.

■ **SUSAN KATZ MILLER**

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