

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Peer Review of Peer Review?

The National Science Foundation may pay a price for overruling two peer-review panels when it awarded a \$120-million magnet laboratory to Florida State rather than Massachusetts Institute of Technology (*Science*, 21 September, p. 1367). Language buried in the NSF appropriations bill passed last week by Congress calls on the National Academy of Sciences to examine "the elements weighed by the NSF in awarding research grants and contracts"—in particular, "the role in the decision process played by outside scientists and executive agency staff."

MIT officials have complained that former NSF director Erich Bloch and David Sanchez, assistant director for mathemati-

cal and physical sciences, misrepresented MIT's technical merits to the board that awarded the grant. These complaints resonated within the Massachusetts congressional delegation: Senator John Kerry (D) and Representative Joe Kennedy (D) called for an Academy investigation of the grant award process.

An NAS spokesperson says the Academy will undertake the study sometime next year. Adding insult to injury, NSF may end up footing the bill. "We're certainly not going to pay for it," says the Academy spokesperson.

Kyoto Laureates

Molecular geneticist Sydney Brenner and primatologist Jane Goodall have been awarded two of this year's three Kyoto Prizes, Japan's highest international awards. Each carries with it ¥45 million (\$300,000).

Brenner, the man who proved the existence of messenger RNA,



Sydney Brenner

is this year's Kyoto "laureate" for Advanced Technology. Since 1986 he has been director of the Molecular Genetics Unit of Great Britain's Medical Research Council. Chimp-watcher Goodall, who runs the Jane Goodall Institute in Colorado, got the prize in Basic Sciences. The third winner, in the Creative Arts and Moral Sciences category, is Italian high-tech architect Renzo Piano.

The Kyoto Prizes were established in 1985 by the Inamori Foundation to honor individuals or groups "who have contributed significantly to the scientific, cultural, and spiritual development of mankind." Of the 15 previous winners, 9 have been from the United States; none from Japan.

unrecovered costs.

This finding contrasts sharply with recent press reports that federal investigators suspect Stanford owes the government as much as \$300 million. Stanford president Donald Kennedy dubbed those reports "imaginative," noting that \$300 million is more than half of the university's total indirect cost recovery over the last decade.

Stanford's won't be the last word on the issue. The validity of its overhead charges is currently being scrutinized by teams from the ONR and from the General Accounting Office. In fact, university administrators elsewhere will be interested to learn that the GAO intends to extend its investigation to other schools as well.

Ecology Hero in Interior Department

The inspector general of the Interior Department has lambasted his federal colleagues at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, charging that they may be sending species to extinction.

At least 34 domestic animal and plant species, including varieties of gophers, frogs, bats, and wildflowers, have been determined within the past 10 years to be extinct. Interior fears hundreds more will soon join the march to oblivion if FWS doesn't get cracking on its listing of endangered species.

An Interior Department report says 600 known-to-be endangered and 3000 probably endangered or threatened domestic species still await listing. At current rates, it could take almost 50 years just to handle this backlog, the report adds. One problem: the FWS's budget for listing species in fiscal 1989 was about \$3.5 million, but the inspector general's report points out that it would cost about \$136 million to list the 2000 species believed to need immediate protection. Worse yet, FWS's annual budget for saving species is \$8.4 million, whereas the report esti-

Stanford Fights Back

Stanford University has turned its 17-inch guns on the Office of Naval Research and fired. Already well known in the scientific community for its high overhead charges, Stanford achieved a bit of notoriety in September when ONR made public allegations of impropriety in the university's overhead charges on government-sponsored research (*Science*, 21 September, p. 1373). Stanford quickly launched an internal review, which has now reported in: not only has it found no instances of wrongdoing, it concludes that the government owes the university \$13 million in

WOMEN IN SCIENCE POLICY

Of 66 top government positions in science, only 5 are held by women, reports *The Scientist* in its 16 October issue.

