mentation of all aspects of the trial will depend on adequate resources." And just how costly such a multiproduct trial might be became clear at the Healy panel meeting. The subcommittee that had been asked to design such a protocol came up with a "large, simple trial" that it estimated would cost from $34 million to $53 million. It would involve 18,000 patients divided into three groups based on their number of CD4 white blood cells. Substudies would attempt to clarify how well changes in "surrogate markers" (such as a person's CD4 count and amount of HIV) predict clinical outcomes—a critical question to AIDS research.

Without knowing what the DOD panel had decided, Healy acknowledged that such a trial may be too expensive for DOD to fund. "If the Department of Defense says we only have $20 million, we have to give them some options," she told her panel. This led the panel to slash the trial's size in half, restricting entry to people who have a mid-range of CD4 cells (200-500). The substudies also were dropped, unless more funds surface. On the basis of that reconfiguration, Healy's panel unanimously voted to approve the multivaccine trial, bringing the NIH panel into general agreement with DOD.

In spite of the unanimous vote, however, some of the panelists expressed deep scientific reservations about the entire enterprise. Said David Ho of New York's Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center: "I don't think we're going to be happy because we've been given a task of coming up with a proposal for a project that NIH has decided has a low priority." And, despite the overall emphasis on a multivaccine trial, the Army's Burke conceded that there's "a possibility" that when DOD looks at the real costs, there may only be enough money to test one preparation: the one from MicroGeneSys. That's a dim prospect to the AIDS research community, but it might be the net effect of all the political and economic constraints surrounding the controversial appropriation. Whether that is, in fact, the outcome will be known before 6 April, which is the deadline by which DOD must tell Congress what it plans to do.

–Jon Cohen

AIDS RESEARCH

Reorganization Plan Draws Fire at NIH

At last summer's international AIDS conference in Amsterdam, a fledgling activist outfit called the Treatment Action Group (TAG) issued a two-volume critique of AIDS research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The heavyweight report (nearly 200 pages) sank without a trace at the conference. But over the past 6 months, it's resurfaced to receive serious attention in another venue: the United States Senate. So seriously has it been considered there that TAG's recommendations form the basis for legislation that would dramatically overhaul how NIH coordinates and funds AIDS research by drastically strengthening the hand of its Office of AIDS Research (OAR). The legislation has stirred concern at NIH—where institute directors see their power being eroded—and it is making waves for new Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Donna Shalala before she's had time to get her sea legs.

Proposed by Senator Edward Kennedy (D–MA), who chairs the Senate's Committee on Labor and Human Resources, the controversial AIDS reform is tucked into the NIH reauthorization bill. A version of the bill, without the AIDS provisions, was vetoed by former President George Bush last year because it would have lifted the ban on therapeutic research involving human fetal tissue. The bill became a top priority for the Senate to push through under President Bill Clinton, and, indeed, it was the first piece of legislation introduced in the Senate this year.

The AIDS portion of the revamped bill gives OAR control over NIH's $1.1 billion AIDS budget. OAR currently coordinates AIDS research at all 21 institutes under the direction of Anthony Fauci, whose main job is heading the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). While OAR can tell an institute that a certain project is redundant or unnecessary, the office does not touch AIDS money, which travels directly from Congress to each institute. In addition to beefing up OAR's funding role, the bill would increase responsibilities for the agency's director, require a strategic plan to guide budget decisions, and establish a discretionary fund OAR can use to bankroll "emergency" AIDS research and fill gaps in existing programs. And those are just the kinds of things the activists had called for. "The TAG report is the genesis of this legislation," says a staffer for Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R–KS), the ranking minority member of the labor committee.

When contacted by *Science*, Fauci and several other institute directors said they had no comment on the legislation. Yet on 22 January, the day after Kennedy introduced the bill, the NIH institute directors held an emergency meeting with NIH Director Bernadine Healy, and insiders say some voiced heated objections. The directors agreed to detail their complaints in a formal memo to Healy, which she forwarded to Shalala that Friday afternoon.

IRA WYMAN/SIGMA

No objection. HHS Secretary Donna Shalala supports the bill.

Neither NIH nor HHS will publicly release the memo, and, in a highly unusual move, Shalala's office even declined to give it to a Senate staff member. But *Science* has learned that a key concern was the increased budgetary authority delegated to OAR. The institute directors said they would not object to OAR being given authority in the planning process to hash out with each institute which projects deserved what funding. But they balked at the notion of having all AIDS funding pass through OAR. Their chief argument was that—by adding another layer in the process whereby funds are delivered—the measure would create delays in the awarding of contracts and grants.

The next day, 23 January, National Cancer Institute director Samuel Broder worked with HHS and Senate staff to modify the legislation. In the draft of the bill that Kennedy's committee unanimously marked up on 26 January, OAR will have no say over the funds that institutes already have committed to AIDS research projects. This "commitment base," which funds 3- to 5-year projects, accounts for about 80% of the AIDS budget. OAR will, however, control funding of all new and competing programs; moreover, each year about 20% of the committed money frees up, meaning that after 5 years, OAR will control the entire NIH AIDS budget—a prospect that many researchers find disturbing. "It adds another layer of bureaucracy," says AIDS researcher Dani Bolognesi of Duke University. "I think it's going to be a disaster."

Kennedy has already received positive letters from more than a dozen scientists, however, including Mathilde Krim of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, former Food and Drug Administration official Ellen Cooper, and Arthur Ammann of the Pediatric AIDS Foundation. AIDS activist Gregg Gonsalves, who co-authored the TAG report with Mark Harrington, says OAR needs the budgetary authority to compel reforms. "We're quite concerned that OAR will remain a paper tiger without teeth to enforce its plans," says Gonsalves. TAG member Derek Hodel of the AIDS Action Council, a Washington,

D.C.-based lobbying group, adds: "Culturally, it's a different way of doing business and that alone is very threatening. The institute directors now have ultimate authority and understandably they resist the notion that they have to give up some."

Faced with the prospect of upsetting Kennedy and the AIDS activists, Shalala threw her support behind the bill in a letter to Vice President Al Gore. "[T]he Clinton Administration supports strengthening AIDS research programs," wrote Shalala. "We believe the bill provides a framework for directing AIDS research in an effective manner." The letter did not raise any of the objections made by the NIH institute directors. Shalala declined to comment on the bill to *Science*.

NIH Director Healy also was uneasy about discussing the bill, but she conceded that when the institute directors met with her on 22 January, they were not four-square behind it. "There was a strong sense at our meeting...that we must show strong support for the president, Secretary Shalala, and the AIDS community," said Healy. "Though some aspects of the legislation were unappealing to many and odious to some, it was inappropriate for NIH to take a do-or- die position at this time."

Sometime during the first week in February, the Senate is expected to pass the bill with little opposition. The House has yet to introduce a similar AIDS reform provision—though it probably will take up the issue with Shalala when she appears on 3 February for a hearing on the bill—and may simply approve the Senate addition in a conference committee. If the bill is approved, Fauci likely will have to give up either the OAR post or his position as NIAID director, leaving the field open for the Clinton Administration to find itself a new AIDS top dog.

–Jon Cohen

SCIENCE AGENCIES

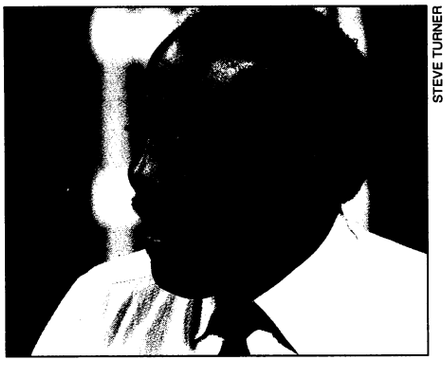
Massey Leaving NSF for Top UC Job

Washington scuttlebutt had long predicted that National Science Foundation (NSF) director Walter Massey would quit in mid-term and trade in his federal experience for a prime university job. Last week, the rumors proved correct: The University of California (UC) announced that it has picked Massey to be senior vice president for academic affairs and provost of the 10-campus UC system, its second highest post. By the time he leaves NSF to take the job in March, Massey will have served just 2 years of his 6-year term, making his tenure one of the shortest in NSF history.

The California appointment—which must still be formally approved by the university's regents—may put Massey in line to succeed UC president Jack Peltason in the top UC position. Peltason, 69, was appointed last year after David Gardner resigned. Peltason's selection, made after a UC search committee deadlocked over two other candidates for the job, is considered by some to be an interim appointment, and the 54-year-old Massey is now widely seen as the heir apparent.

At NSF, the announcement of Massey's impending departure, while no surprise, has left some confusion. Normally, Massey's deputy, Frederick Bernthal, would take over as acting director until President Bill Clinton named a replacement. But Bernthal is himself a presidential appointee from the Bush Administration and is not expected to be around for long. "Fred may beat Walter out the door," says one NSF official. The chain of command from Bernthal down is murky enough to need some White House guidance before an acting director can be identified.

It may take the White House some time to find a permanent replacement for Massey. A Clinton aide says that NSF is "not a top priority" at the moment, and that no candidate list, short or otherwise, exists for Massey's post. Jack Gibbons, the new White House science adviser (see p. 751), is expected to play a large role in the selection process, but with dozens of other empty science and technology posts throughout the government, he is expected to have his hands full for the next few months.



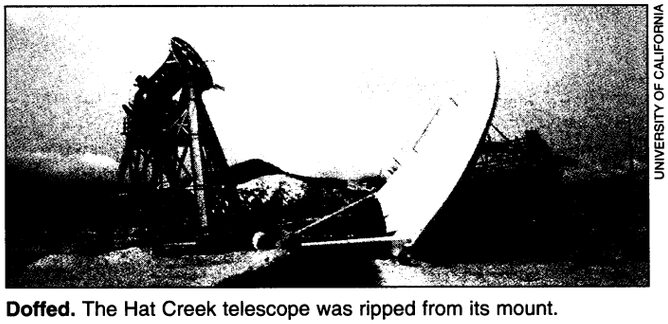
STEVE TURNER

Next stop UC president? Walter Massey.

–Christopher Anderson

OBSERVATORIES

Radio Astronomers Go Hatless



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Doffed. The Hat Creek telescope was ripped from its mount.

Hats and strong winds don't go together. On the night of Thursday, 21 January, a freak gust of wind blew over the 30-year-old Hat Creek radio telescope near Mount Lassen in Northern California. Carl Heiles, a radio astronomer from the University of California, Berkeley, who was at the observatory when the accident happened, says that the fully steerable telescope was "ripped from its bearings," leaving the 26-meter dish on the ground and the mounting mechanism perched precariously on the pedestal.

The destruction of the telescope will crimp several ongoing studies, says Heiles. In recent years, the telescope has measured benchmarks for studies of crustal motions along the West Coast and taken part in NASA's search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI). Its loss also ends an illustrious career. The telescope began operating in 1962, and in the 30 years since then has made a ground-breaking survey of the 21-centimeter emission from atomic hydrogen in the galaxy, followed by galactic maps of hydroxyl and formaldehyde. It had also served as one leg in an early international network of radio telescopes performing very long baseline interferometry.

It is not yet clear whether or how the telescope will be replaced. Heiles says the University of California, which operated the telescope, may be able to pay the $5 million replacement cost through its self-insurance program. But he adds that it would not make much sense to build a direct replica. In the past few years the main effort at Hat Creek has been to build a high-resolution array of movable 6-meter dishes working at millimeter rather than centimeter wavelengths. The new array, with six telescopes now in place, has applications ranging from planetary astronomy to the detection of cold gas in distant galaxies, and Heiles and his radio astronomy colleagues think expanding the array might be the best way to reincarnate the Hat Creek telescope.

–David Lindley