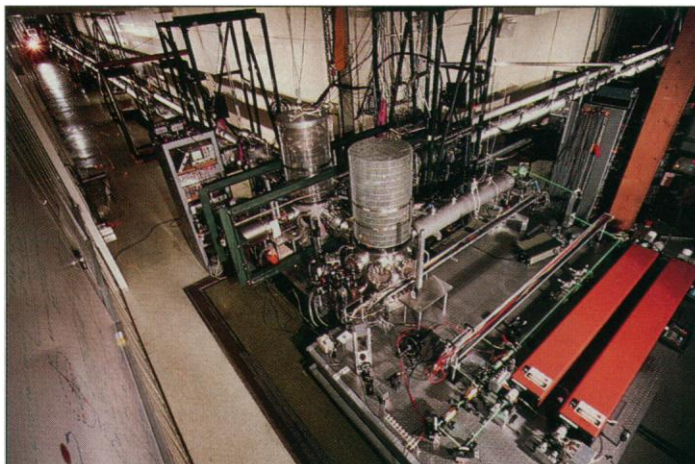


Sky's the Limit for Women's Health Groups

You'd think that after wresting \$805 million from Congress for women's health in 1993—including \$210 million in new funding for breast cancer research (see p. 1068)—women's groups would be sitting back to celebrate a job well done. Not quite—they say they've only just begun. Earlier this month the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues released a budget request for 1994 that asks for \$1.05 billion for women's health research and services, including a \$67 million raise for breast cancer research, the Women's Health Initiative, and other programs at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Altogether, the request would be 31% over this year's budget, which was itself 81% over 1992.

Are these figures just pie in the sky? Women's advocates don't think so. They point out that more women are serving in Congress than ever before and filling key budget-setting positions. Nor do women's groups think the amount they're asking for is outrageous. "We're trying to be reasonable," says a congressional staffer who works on women's issues. Indeed, she says, "we're lowballing it" this year because of concerns about the deficit. In the future, women's advocates say, they hope to increase women's health spending yet more. "This is just the beginning," says another staffer. "We're raring to go."

In contrast, basic biomedical research groups appear to be setting their sights lower with every day. Some 100 educational, scientific, and medical organizations sent a letter to Congress earlier this month asking for just \$400 million more than the president's barely cost-of-living \$10.7 billion request for NIH. That's \$600 million less than they were asking for just 2 months ago. Why the retreat? Research advocates say they're being realistic: Congress is in the mood for deficit reduction, and basic research just doesn't have the same political support as women's issues.



Say goodbye. Physicist Ronald Drever is not welcome at LIGO's prototype.

Divorce Splits LIGO's 'Dysfunctional Family'

Time to give up hope that the combatants of the bitter battle within the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) project might shake hands and make up? That's the way it looks now that a four-man outside review team has declared that Caltech physicist Ronald Drever, who cofounded the project, and the rest of the LIGO team at Caltech and MIT are, in the words of one insider, "a dysfunctional family that needs to be split up."

That opinion may end an ugly chapter for the \$250 million project, which has been embroiled in internecine battles since Drever was effectively fired a year ago by management (*Science*, 30 April, p. 612). When a faculty committee found Drever had been inappropriately dismissed, Caltech president Thomas Everhart pledged to integrate Drever back into the project. So last month, LIGO's

new oversight committee, headed by former Jet Propulsion Laboratory director Lew Allen, brought in four consultants familiar with gravity wave detection—University of Colorado's John Hall, France's Allain Brillet, Germany's Karsten Danzmann, and Scotland's James Hough—to review research proposals put forth by Drever and the LIGO team and determine how the two sides could co-exist productively.

Easier said than done, it seems. The consultants concluded that proposals of Drever and the LIGO team were simply incompatible and recommended that Drever be kept off the project and allowed to pursue an independent research effort, a position the Caltech administration has now endorsed.

That hasn't made everyone happy. Drever supporters charge that the hearing wasn't the fair arbitration that was promised and that some of the consultants, who work on international efforts to

detect gravity waves, may have had a conflict of interest. "The three Europeans, in some sense, have to collaborate with LIGO," says one disgruntled Caltech professor. In any case, Drever's days with LIGO appear over—he is now negotiating with Caltech over funding to conduct independent research.

Fraudbuster Foreswears Food

When officials at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced last month that they were closing down the controversial fraudbusting operation of NIH scientists Walter Stewart and Ned Feder (*Science*, 16 April, p. 288), researchers believed that a long, strange chapter in NIH history was coming to an end. But now the tale has taken a new twist: Stewart has stopped eating. To protest NIH's lock-up of the pair's misconduct files and the treatment given various other misconduct cases and issues, Stewart last week started a water-only hunger strike.

Stewart began fasting on 10 May, the day NIH officials had the locks changed on the lab he shared with Feder at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The two have since drawn up a list of demands they want met, including reinstatement to their former jobs and access to their files, which Stewart says contain data submitted by whistleblowers and scientists wrongly accused of fraud. The statement also demands an "institutional commitment to get to the bottom of why these injustices occur so frequently."

L. Earl Lawrence, acting deputy director of NIDDK, says that he has not yet seen the statement. But he says he's "concerned" for Stewart. "I can only hope [Stewart] will decide to pursue his concerns in a more standard way." What if NIH refuses the request? "That would be a shame," Stewart says, adding that he "can't say exactly" what he would do then.

Short List for NIH Director Job

Who will run the National Institutes of Health? With just over a month to go before Director Bernadine Healy is due to leave, officials at the Department of Health and Human Services, NIH's parent agency, say the candidates have been narrowed to four. But only three names keep surfacing: Ruth Kirschstein, the long-time director of NIH's National Institute of General Medical Sciences, who was trained as a virologist; Nobelist Harold Varmus of the University of California, San Francisco, who codiscovered cellular oncogenes; and Herbert Pardes, dean of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and a psychiatrist who was the director of the National Institute of Mental Health from 1978 to 1984.