

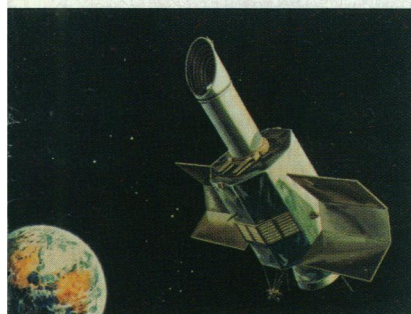
edited by RICHARD STONE

Ultraviolet Explorer May Buck NASA Tide

Rumored to be the latest budget victim at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a space telescope called the International Ultraviolet Explorer (IUE) may, in fact, get a reprieve. NASA officials told *Science* there should be enough money—and White House desire—to continue operating the spacecraft next year.

The agency has persuaded the White House to save the aging IUE, probably by creating a line item devoted to extending successful missions beyond their prime, says a NASA official involved in budget negotiations.

Saving IUE would be good



NASA/YOJI KONDO

Survivor. IUE may avoid shutdown.

news for astronomers, who've witnessed NASA's constricting science budget threaten planned missions to Pluto and Saturn. Launched into Earth orbit in 1978, IUE has beamed home

thousands of images of supernovae, galaxies, and interstellar gas. Despite losing use of four of six gyros, IUE still functions well, says project scientist Yoji Kondo. Nevertheless, until recently NASA officials were skeptical of being able to afford \$4 million to fund IUE in 1995, and project scientists were planning to turn off the spacecraft in September.

Call for a Stronger U.K. Science Czar

If power depends on who controls the purse, then an influential committee of British legislators is demanding that U.K. science minister William Waldegrave empower his new research supremo. In a report expected this week, the House of Lords science and technology committee argues that John Cadogan, director-general of the U.K. research councils, should have personal control of at least \$18 million of the government's research budget to help forge a coherent strategy for U.K. academic science.

Cadogan, formerly British Petroleum's research chief, became director-general on 1 January. In the new post, Cadogan must coordinate the activities of six revamped research councils that begin operations on 1 April. The councils will spend some \$1.8 billion a year, mostly on basic research.

But the government erred in

No AIDS Chief Yet

The top choice to head the Office of AIDS Research (OAR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has pulled out of the running.

Until last week, a search committee was leaning toward picking Harvard virologist Bernard Fields to head OAR, which oversees NIH's \$1.3 billion AIDS budget. But Fields has bowed out. "I've had past medical problems and I felt it was more of a job than I can handle, even though at the moment I'm healthy," Fields says. "It's the hardest decision I've ever made."

Sources close to the committee say it's likely the panel will reopen its search, rather than tap a candidate already interviewed.

appointing Cadogan as a high-level adviser rather than giving him direct authority over the council chiefs, argues Lords committee chair Brian Flowers. The report says Cadogan should publish his advice regarding research council funding decisions, which would hold Waldegrave accountable to Parliament if he ignores that advice. And it recommends that Cadogan himself earmark 1% to 2% of the councils' budget to projects he deems important. "This might involve backing hunches not yet appreciated by the councils," the report states.

Parliamentary rules prohibited Waldegrave and Cadogan from commenting on the report until 27 January, after *Science* went to press.

Feds Drop Gallo Criminal Probe

For Robert Gallo, 5 years of allegations and investigations are ending not with a bang but a whimper. Last week the U.S. Attorney's office in Baltimore dropped the remaining federal probe of Gallo, ending a series of federal investigations into the discovery of the AIDS virus and the ensuing AIDS-test patent.

Gallo and former National Cancer Institute colleague Mikulas Popovic were accused of taking undue credit for the discovery. But the Gallo probe began to unravel last November, when an appeals board overturned the prosecution of Popovic by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Research Integrity.

The U.S. Attorney's office was glum on the prospects of winning its case against Gallo. "We are not satisfied that there is a substantial likelihood of convincing a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that either Dr. Gallo or Dr. Popovic acted with the requisite criminal intent," the prosecutors wrote in a 19 January letter to the HHS Inspector General's office. The decision was first reported in *The Chicago Tribune* last week.

Rather than exonerate Gallo, however, the prosecutors pegged their decision to legal hurdles. They stated that the statute of limitations bars prosecution of conduct prior to December 1988, and that the U.S. Attorney in Maryland had no jurisdiction over patent negotiations and other actions alleged to have occurred in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Attorney for D.C. declined to prosecute the case 2 years ago.

Contacted by *Science*, Gallo said he was "frustrated" that the prosecutors said they halted the probe due to technicalities rather than a lack of evidence of wrongdoing. "My reputation is everything," he says. "I still have no public forum to clear my name."

One ordeal remains for Gallo: Representative John Dingell (D-MI) is expected to release a report on the Gallo case in May.

Texas Presses for SSC Medical Park

Now that the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) is legally dead, Texas officials are hoping a new medical enterprise will rise from its ashes.

Ever since Congress pulled the plug on the SSC last fall, several entities have been vying for the remains of the unfinished accelerator (*Science*, 3 December 1993, p.1507). One party is a Texas consortium hoping to build the National Biomedical Tracer Facility, a proton accelerator funded by the Department of Energy to produce and distribute radioisotopes for medical and industrial uses. The consortium—based 40 miles north of Waxahachie, Texas, SSC's epicenter—believes the SSC's partially completed linear accelerator can be modified to fit the bill.

That's music to the ears of an SSC advisory panel to Texas Governor Ann Richards, which has requested a state report on the projected number of jobs and the potential cash flow from an isotope plant and an asso-

ciated cancer treatment facility based at the SSC lab.

But not everyone agrees with the idea: A report by a National Research Council (NRC) committee, written earlier this month on short notice for the Texas panel, questions whether a Waxahachie medical park "would be competitive for federal support." The NRC panel thinks Texas would be better off keeping 100 SSC scientists and engineers on the payroll and converting the lab into an education and research center.

But the Texans aren't persuaded by the NRC's skepticism of the SSC's potential medical uses. "They're engineers, not medical scientists, and they were mostly interested in superconducting magnets," complains panelist Cathy Bonner, a Richards confidant. "We're talking about a potential billion-dollar industry from radioisotopes," she says.

Richards' advisory panel hopes to hear from state officials at its next meeting, set for 4 February.