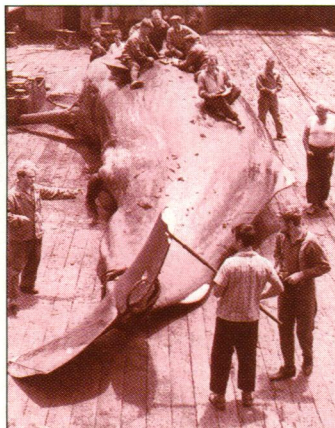


edited by RICHARD STONE

RIA-NOVOSTI/SOVIAPHOTO



Going fishing. To fund a study of Soviet-era whaling abuses, think tank has cast line for U.S. backers.

Russian Environment Center Seeks Boosters

One of Russia's top environmental scientists will be passing the hat in the United States next week to finance a new think tank that's studying the country's staggering environmental problems.

Aleksei Yablokov, a former adviser to President Boris Yeltsin and now chair of the environment committee of Russia's National Security Council, established the Center for Russian Environmental Policy last October. The center has brought together Russian experts to prepare reports on such topics as nuclear safety, groundwater contamination, and infectious disease rates.

But an initial planning grant from the W. Alton Jones Foundation has run out, and Yablokov is seeking \$50,000 from U.S. foundations and environmental groups to keep the center going for another 2 years. Topping the center's agenda are analyses of Russia's plutonium production and recently declassified data on how Russia falsified its annual whale catches.

Even if Yablokov's fundraising efforts succeed, however, it's not clear how much influence the center will wield. "The government will listen to Yablokov, but whether his advice will be implemented is another question," says demographer Murray Feshbach, a Russian environmental expert at Georgetown University and an adviser to the center.

Chinese Delegation to Revive Science Pact

High-level science policy talks between the United States and China will resume this month, after a 7-year hiatus, with the visit of a Chinese delegation to Washington. A 1981 agreement between the two countries calls for biennial meetings of a joint commission, but the United States suspended the talks in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and a dispute over data from a social science study.

This month's meeting, set for 11 to 13 April, is part of the Clinton Administration's new strategy to maintain normal relations with China as a way to improve that country's treatment of dissidents. The policy is under scrutiny by Congress in the run-up to a June decision by President Clinton on whether to renew China's favorable trade status. U.S. officials hope that this month's talks will stimulate joint research in environmental technologies, renewable energy, drug development, and advanced materials for transportation, with an eye toward narrowing the \$23 billion trade gap with China.

OSTP Looks for Diverse Scientific Help

The upper echelons of science policy are about to become less male and caucasian. Nearly half

of the new President's Council of Advisers for Science and Technology (PCAST) will be made up of women and minority scientists, says science adviser John Gibbons, fulfilling a Clinton campaign promise to field a team that "looks like America."

Testifying last week before the House appropriations subcommittee that funds the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), which he heads, Gibbons revealed the racial and gender composition of the 17-member body. Eight will be either women or minorities, Gibbons said. PCAST's 12-member predecessor, which folded when George Bush left office, included one woman and no minorities.

Gibbons also said he has toiled to diversify the National Science Board, the 24-member body that oversees the National Science Foundation. This spring Clinton is due to name eight new members; Gibbons said he expects six women and four minorities.

Gibbons made his comments after Representative Jerry Lewis (R-CA) took him to task for having only seven minorities on his 40-person OSTP staff, and only one at a senior level. "I'm not proud of those numbers," Gibbons said. Gibbons did note that women account for nearly half his staff and serve as two of the office's four associate directors.

Livermore Chief Hasn't Knuckled Under—Yet

Last week embattled Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory chief John Nuckolls received an ultimatum: Resign by fax, effective July 1, or risk losing the chance—offered last February—of a continuing role at the lab at no loss of salary. But Nuckolls has refused to bow to that request by University of California (UC) president Jack Peltason. He insists that it would be better for the lab to keep him at the helm until early next year when a commission, appointed by Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Hazel O'Leary and headed by Robert Galvin, is to issue a report on the roles of the weapons labs in this post-Cold War world.

The face-off is becoming increasingly heated and public. As *Science* went to press, Nuckolls was maintaining that university administrators, by withholding the nature of their criticism of the lab's management, were preventing the lab's senior staff from drawing up a comprehensive transition plan. Meanwhile, Stanford physicist Sidney Drell, who chairs UC's President's Council and who is knowledgeable about the lab, was not consulted by Peltason and has reportedly told Nuckolls' supporters that he's unhappy with how UC officials have handled the situation. Top officials in the DOE and the Defense Department have told *Science* they are mystified by Peltason's rush to judgment.

Fisher Resigns

University of Pittsburgh surgeon Bernard Fisher stepped down this week as principal investigator of the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project after its sponsor, the National Cancer Institute, found an "irregularity" during a visit this week to an undisclosed trial site. NCI has stopped enrolling patients for all seven trials in the project.

Europe to Get New Science Policy Council

One hundred top European scientists will soon have a new part-time job. By this summer, European Union (EU) research commissioner Antonio Ruberti aims to set up a European Science and Technology Assembly to advise EU officials on the scientific content of the union's research programs and to analyze scientific issues facing European society.

The idea has received a cautious welcome from other pan-European scientific organizations, which have long complained that researchers have scant influence on EU decision making. But senior officials say it's too early to tell if the proposed assembly will be influential. "We have to see [more details] before we decide whether it's one step forward, or one step back," says Dai Rees, president of the European Science Foundation, an association of research councils that's been angling for a role in helping set EU research policy (*Science*, 18 June 1993, p. 1734). Crucial to the new body's success, says Rees, will be a 20-person subset of the assembly, called a bureau, that will serve as the council's workhorse.

Despite its promise, there are fears that the new assembly will give researchers a smaller role in awarding basic-research grants. That's because the assembly will replace a committee of eminent researchers, called CODEST, that organizes the process of making grants for the EU's programs in fundamental research, in addition to providing general scientific advice. No such grant-making role is envisioned for the assembly, and some researchers fear that these basic science programs will now fall more firmly under the control of bureaucrats at EU headquarters in Brussels.