relief earlier this year and was denied. NIH has since filed a second appeal seeking a waiver for half the positions that would be affected, on the grounds that NIH is different from most agencies in that at least half of its top staffers are not administrators but researchers. The report also recommends that NIH streamline procurement and personnel procedures where possible. And it seeks clearer guidelines on NIH-industry collaboration.

Distinction without difference?

In one key respect, the report doesn't respond to the charge Congress laid out. Congress asked for a scheme that provides a "well-thought-out division of labor between the extramural and intramural programs." Marks said, however, that when the panel tried to get institutes to explain how they divide their resources between internal and external projects, they found that the numbers—and the explanations—were all over the lot. In some cases, he said, "we were unable to divine" how institutes make a decision on resource allocation. The panel offered its own solution: Cap the intramural program at the present level—11.3% of NIH's total budget—and ask each institute in the future to justify funding decisions in an annual planning paper. These plans should be coordinated by the NIH director.

A House appropriations subcommittee staffer involved in drafting the request that led to this study said members of Congress will probably find the report a "responsive, positive, useful product." He didn't think it was important to have absolute consistency across all the institutes on mechanisms of funding or percentage of funds devoted to intramural research: "Uniformity is not the goal here, but thoughtfulness is." He added that Varmus may already have enough authority to carry out many of the proposed changes, though it would take new legislation to alter some personnel and procurement rules. If anything, he said, the appropriations committee would be willing to "beef up" the NIH director's authorities.

Marks said he is hopeful that the changes recommended in this report will actually be carried out, even though some of them have been proposed before. Marks himself sat on a panel in 1976 that urged NIH to adopt more rigorous methods of peer review and stronger management of the intramural program. As the current report says, many such suggestions were "ignored" or resisted in the past. This time, Marks said, he and members of the outside panel "have a certain sense of optimism," because Varmus and his staff at NIH want to improve the system, and because they have strong support from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala. However, Marks added, "only time will tell if this optimism is well placed."

–Eliot Marshall

HIGH-ENERGY PHYSICS

DOE Ponders Yet More Uses for SSC

Scientists sometimes had trouble explaining why the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) should be built. But now that Congress has killed the unfinished particle accelerator, there is no shortage of ideas for putting its Texas corpse to use. Last week the Department of Energy (DOE) announced grants ranging from $25,000 to $150,000 for six "follow-on" proposals. And that's in addition to four projects already under study in Texas. The six proposals, chosen from among 34 ideas submitted, are as follows:

- An experiment using the SSC's powerful superconducting magnets to measure the effective index of refraction for light of different polarizations in a strong magnetic field, proposed by a group of Texas researchers;
- Research to study gas convection and turbulence at low temperatures using the SSC's cryogenic facilities, by the University of Oregon;
- A geotechnical research facility to study the rock exposed in the 12 miles of tunnel already dug, by the University of Wisconsin and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory;
- A research and science education center, using the SSC's computer facilities, engineering facilities, and mechanical shops, by the University of Texas;
- A plan to share SSC personal computers and workstations with minority institutions and network them to the lab's central computer facility, by the Tuples Collaboration and Particle Detector Research Center; and
- A Regional Industrial Technology Institute at the SSC site, focusing on training, manufacturing, and technology development, by a group of companies and education centers in three states.

Meanwhile, the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission, which managed the state's $1-billion investment in the project, is reviewing proposals for a regional supercomputer center, a cancer research facility, a center for superconductivity research, and prairie restoration at the Texas site. The commission has a DOE grant of up to $6 million to explore the proposals.

The ideas may be fresh, but the prospects for any follow-on project are far from certain. Legislators have warned the agency not to start expensive new projects or to funnel money to Texas in the guise of an orderly termination of the lab (*Science*, 25 March, p. 1681), and last week the congressional General Accounting Office (GAO) released a report concluding that DOE's request for an additional $180 million to shut down the SSC was "not justified." GAO recommended that Congress withhold funding for any projects whose costs are not yet known. DOE officials declined to comment, saying they had not yet officially received the GAO report.

–Christopher Anderson

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Toxic Tiff Spreads Beyond France

PARIS—Just a few days before setting off for the French city of Nancy to attend an international symposium on the health hazards of glycol ethers last month, Ronald Gray, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, received a fax from a French official saying the meeting had been canceled. Soon after, another fax arrived saying the meeting was on again. From that point on, says Gray, "it just got more and more bizarre."

When the participants arrived for the opening of the 3-day symposium, they learned that the meeting's organizer, André Cicolella, an internationally known expert on glycol ethers, had been suspended without pay from his job at the French Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité (INRS) and barred from attending. And the French research ministry—one of a long list of sponsors of the symposium—had withdrawn its support upon learning that Cicolella was no longer in charge. On day two, Cicolella showed up with a court order in hand, allowing him to attend as a private citizen. And on day three, at the close of the meeting, Cicolella was called to the podium by Bryan Hardin, an assistant director of the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)—who had reluctantly assumed the chair—and given a standing ovation for his role in organizing the symposium. This display of support reportedly provoked INRS officials to stalk out angrily.

Missing chairman. André Cicolella, barred from meeting.

This strange affair has