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.

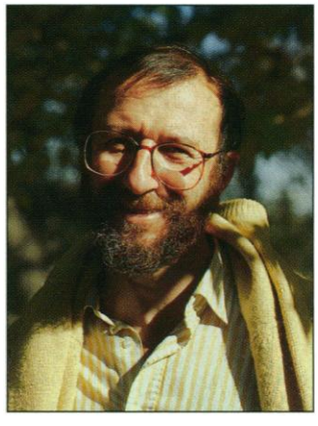
–Christopher Anderson

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

made Cicolella a cause célèbre on both sides of the Atlantic. Some researchers are claiming—though without any specific evidence—that INRS is attempting to muzzle him because he has been trying to draw attention to the occupational hazards of glycol ethers. (For the past 4 years, Cicolella has run a Europe-wide research program on the effects of the compounds, widely used in semiconductor manufacturing, solvents, paints, and other applications.) And the flap has focused attention on potential conflicts of interest in the way INRS—roughly France's equivalent of NIOSH—is financed.

Ostensibly, at least, Cicolella's problems with the INRS administration began with a disagreement with Michel Lanotte of the Institute of Hematology at the Saint-Louis Hospital in Paris. Lanotte and Cicolella had collaborated on a paper published in the journal *Leukemia* in April 1992, demonstrating that certain glycol ethers and their acidic derivatives were toxic to cultures of developing blood cells.

Later, however, Lanotte discovered that one of the glycol ethers used in the experiments had been contaminated, possibly influencing the published results. But he and Cicolella were not able to agree about the source of the contamination, or about the details of a correction that Lanotte wanted to submit to *Leukemia*. Finally, Lanotte complained to the scientific director of INRS's research center just outside Nancy, where Cicolella works. But when Cicolella was called to a meeting at INRS headquarters in Paris to explain the situation, he refused to attend. He later told *Science* he wanted the matter heard by a committee of scientific experts. The INRS administration, considering this refusal to be insubordination, brought disciplinary charges against him, which could potentially result in his being fired after 22 years at INRS. However, an internal advisory committee convened to hear the charges concluded on 9 May that there were insufficient grounds to dismiss Cicolella.

INRS officials insist that the proceedings against Cicolella are strictly an internal affair. "It has absolutely nothing to do with the symposium or with scientific matters," says INRS director-general Dominique Moyen. "It is purely a disciplinary question." A large number of Cicolella's colleagues at INRS have signed a petition supporting him, however, and some French occupational-health experts, while praising Cicolella's scientific work, are claiming that the affair highlights obstacles facing occupational-health research in France.

"Cicolella is very interested in occupational cancer," says Bernard Cassou, professor of public health at the René Descartes University in Paris, "and in France that is very difficult to talk about. He has dynamized this field and developed an international collaboration, but this work does not please the employers." For example, says Cassou, only about 150 workers are compensated for occupational cancer each year, "but experts estimate the prevalence to be actually about 6000 to 7000 people per year. Yet if you point this out, you start to frighten people."

Cassou's view is shared by Marcel Goldberg, director of INSERM's unit for social and economic epidemiology in Paris. "I think the real problem is with the structure of the INRS," he says. INRS is funded by France's national health insurance scheme, into which both employers and employees contribute. And that, say Goldberg and a number of other French experts, can lead to conflicts of interest. "There should be an internal mode of function that guarantees independence for the [INRS] researchers, but it appears that this does not exist," Goldberg says. Moreover, he strongly supports Cicolella's demand that the dispute with Lanotte be resolved by a scientific committee.

Moyen rejects charges that he has a hidden motive for his actions. "I'm not interested in being pressured, either by the employers or the unions," he says, insisting that the Cicolella case is "just a stupid, banal, sad affair, about someone who cannot follow the rules."

Meanwhile, some of Cicolella's fellow scientists in the United States—including Gray and University of California epidemiologist Shanna Swan—are still trying to figure out what happened back in Nancy. But that hasn't stopped them from taking sides: They are refusing to allow their presentations at the meeting to be published in the symposium proceedings unless Moyen reinstates Cicolella. Moyen told *Science* that he would take the advisory committee's recommendation into account, but said "it is my decision to make."

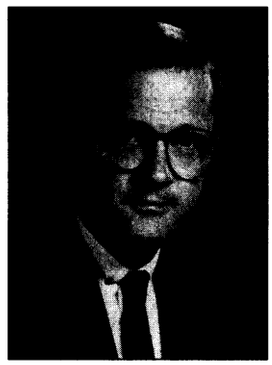
–Michael Balter

Michael Balter is a science writer in Paris.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

House Trims NSF Funding Plan

The buzzards have begun circling over the Administration's request to boost the $3-billion budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF) by 6% in 1995. Their arrival, in the form of cost-conscious legislators, is a bad sign for any federal research agency hoping for a budget increase that outpaces inflation.



Cost conscious. Representative Boehlert supports NSF, but not at any price.

Federal budgets proceed along two at times parallel tracks: Authorization bills set broad policy and budget guidelines, while appropriations bills dish out cold hard cash. Last week, the House of Representatives moved ahead on the first track, approving a bill to reauthorize NSF programs that would cut in half the Administration's request for a $180-million increase in NSF's $2.2-billion research account. The 227 to 197 vote came on an amendment from Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R–NY), who 6 weeks earlier had failed to persuade the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee to make a similar cut. Boehlert took his case to the House floor and convinced his colleagues that NSF's request for an 8.3% increase for research was out of line with a no-growth 1995 federal budget and efforts to reduce the deficit.

"We offered something that wouldn't alienate NSF supporters but would allow members to express their desire to reduce the deficit," said David Goldston, a Boehlert aide on the science subcommittee. "In no way should it be viewed as an attack on NSF."

The reauthorization must next clear the Senate, and it may be several months before a final version is approved by Congress. In the meantime, the appropriations subcommittee that funds NSF and numerous other agencies may begin this week to draft a bill setting actual 1995 spending levels. That bill must also be approved by both the House and Senate, and any differences reconciled before Congress adjourns in October. Still, NSF officials view the reauthorization vote as a warning sign of the anti-spending mood in Congress this year. "I may be new around here, but I'm told that it's rare for an appropriations committee to give an agency more than its authorized level," says NSF Director Neal Lane, who took up his post last fall.

Boehlert's amendment caught the higher education community by surprise, largely because university lobbyists have been focusing on defeating the Administration's proposed 1-year freeze on overhead payments to universities for the cost of supporting federally funded research. The freeze, which was included in the House bill, would cost NSF-funded universities an estimated $35 million next year. University lobbyists haven't given up, however. They will argue their case on 23 May at a closed-door meeting with White House officials.

–Jeffrey Mervis