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."

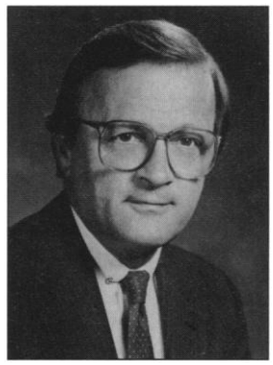
–Michael Balter

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