

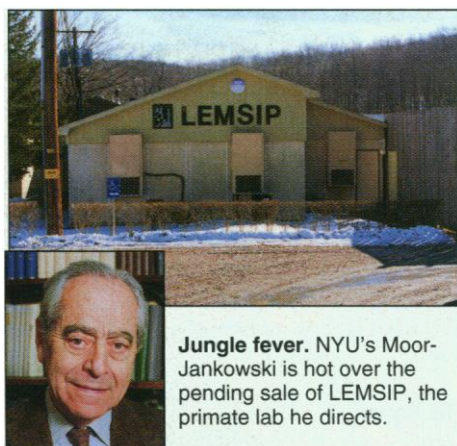
## House Budgets Spell Trouble for Science

The strange term "602b allocation" may sound like arcane congressional jargon, but it could translate quickly into something tangible: major cuts for medical research, the space program, and science grants. The House Appropriations Committee last week drafted its 602b decision, divvying up 1996 federal government spending among its 13 panels—and the two subcommittees that appropriate the bulk of science spending came out worst.

The Labor, Health and Human Services subcommittee, which oversees the pot of money that includes the National Institutes of Health (NIH), received \$2.2 billion less than the 1995 level of \$70 billion. Chair John Porter (R-IL) "is committed to shielding NIH," but that means he "must cut other areas of the bill more heavily," a congressional staffer said.

The subcommittee that oversees spending for NASA and the National Science Foundation took a \$1.8 billion cut compared with last year's \$73 billion. "We were anticipating getting crushed," said one unhappy aide.

And it could get worse. If President Bill Clinton vetoes the bill that rescinds 1995 funding, appropriators will slash the 1996 budget further to meet spending limits. Those decisions will be made before the August recess.



**Jungle fever.** NYU's Moor-Jankowski is hot over the pending sale of LEMSIP, the primate lab he directs.

## NYU to Quit Its Monkey Business

New York University has begun shopping around to shed its Laboratory for Experimental Medicine and Surgery in Primates (LEMSIP), leaving the fate of the highly regarded lab up in the air. Its director, meanwhile, claims that administrators are taking this action in retaliation for his failure to help defend NYU in another controversy.

LEMSIP has been a leader in work on experimental AIDS and hepatitis vaccines. The 30-year-old lab houses about 225 chimpanzees—nearly 20% of those used in U.S. research.

The decision to sell LEMSIP has upset its director, Jan Moor-Jankowski, who contends NYU is getting rid of the lab in retaliation for his resignation last August from NYU's animal welfare

oversight panel. He says he quit in protest over experiments by NYU's Ron Wood, whose studies on cocaine and monkey behavior have come under fire from animal rights activists but have been defended vigorously by the school. Wood's lab is part of NYU's Institute for Environmental Medicine, which would not be affected

by the pending sale.

NYU officials, however, deny the charges. "There is no relationship whatsoever" between Moor-Jankowski's resignation and the sale, says David Scotch, an associate dean at NYU School of Medicine. He says LEMSIP is on the block because it no longer supports NYU Medical Center's core basic research, a contention that Moor-Jankowski disputes.

NYU is negotiating over LEMSIP with two outfits: the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center and the Frederick Coulston Foundation, which runs another large primate lab. Moor-Jankowski says he's not keen on joining Coulston, which he says in the past has used monkeys in toxicology tests—a practice he opposes. But his wishes are probably irrelevant. "I'm not even allowed to be involved in any discussions," he says.

## NASA's \$30 Billion Viral Infection

Declaring the space station "the Ebola virus" of the U.S. space program, Representative Tim Roemer (D-IN) last week made this year's first surgical stab at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) \$30 billion program.

Roemer and other opponents who consider the station a blight on the budget have so far failed to cure their patient. This summer, however, they are hoping that freshman Republicans, eager to slash federal spending, will help excise the program from NASA's budget. Evidence the freshmen may be readily fomented came on 17 May, when several voted in favor of a radical budget plan that would have canceled the station's proposed \$2.1 billion funding for 1996. The measure died, but the opposition did not.

Roemer and others are planning a new attack, and they're banking on help from Democrats. They hope that a disgruntled Rep. George Brown (D-CA) might join their cause and pull others with him. Brown, ranking minority member of the House Science Committee and a longtime station advocate, is angry with Republican plans to cut NASA while keeping the station intact—a stance that he sees endangering all science funding.

Station supporters, however, are taking the Brown factor lightly. Representatives Robert Walker (R-PA) and James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who chair the Science Committee and its space subcommittee, respectively, have opted to move ahead on 6 June with a bill to fund the station through 2002. They postponed introducing the bill earlier this month because of concerns that Brown's opposition could sink it, but now they're confident it will pass, staffers say.

As for the freshman revolt, a Republican staffer says that's hogwash. "We've proposed a balanced budget that is still able to include the station," says the staffer. "We haven't noticed any defections."

## OTA Pleads for Its Life

What would you do if your boss invited you to a meeting at which you expected to be fired? Offer to cut your salary by 30%? Promise to do a better job? Ask influential friends to lobby on your behalf? If you're Roger Herdman, director of the imperiled Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), you'd try all three. But last week, nothing seemed to help.

Herdman testified before a Senate subcommittee that controls his agency's \$21 million budget in what would normally be an opportunity to defend his plans for 1996. But this is not a normal year for the 23-year-old OTA, which is slated for the ax in budget measures passed by both houses of Congress last month.

Panel Chair Connie Mack (R-FL) said he has no quarrel with the quality of OTA's work; rather, he says, OTA is an unaffordable luxury. Mack asked whether

Congress has other ways of getting the information in OTA reports, but he pre-empted Herdman's reply by saying, "I believe that the answer is 'Yes.'"

In a last-ditch effort to curry favor with the panel, Herdman announced a plan to trim operating costs by as much as 30% on top of recent senior staff cuts of 35%. He also promised to keep the agency focused on technology—a response to complaints from some members that OTA has strayed into other areas.

OTA is not without friends on Capitol Hill: Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Charles Grassley (R-IA), and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) all testified about the important service that OTA performs. But Mack was unmoved. Asked after the hearing if he had heard anything that would dissuade him from his plan to zero out the agency's budget, Mack replied: "No, I did not."