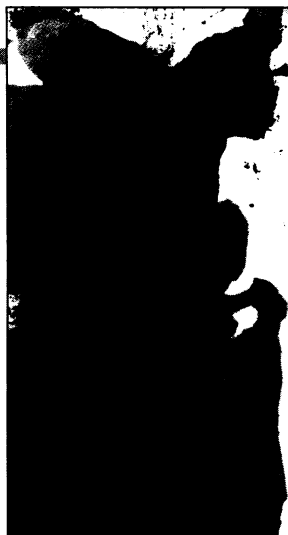


search permits or to issue any new ones.

The disputed sites are rare areas of long-term continuous human occupation, and one, which lies at 44 degrees south, represents the world's most southerly human occupation at the height of the Ice Age and shows how humans adapted to the severe conditions of those times. "They were living right at the end of the world," says Allen, "and only a few hundred meters from glaciers." While Murray says he and his colleagues will return the artifacts and faunal remains from the sites, he is adamant that they will do so only after completing their analyses—and when they have a guarantee from the government that the stones and bones will not be destroyed.

Last year TALC did scatter a sampling of 12,000- to 17,000-year-old artifacts over ancestral lands that had been flooded by a dam. The aborigines did this "to heal" the site,



P. SMITH/HEBREW UNIV.

Will science get buried?
Laws in Israel call for the immediate reburial of this skeleton, before any scientific analysis is undertaken.

according to Greg Lehman, an aborigine and the heritage officer at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. And he adds that it's no concern of the scientists what the aborigines decide to do with any of these materials. "We will do what is right according to our customs and values. We're prepared to argue our rights to this material at any level—to the High Court of Australia if it comes to that," Lehman says.

Other Australian archaeologists are closely watching the Tasmanian standoff, but few believe their colleagues will have the final say. "I went through a whole decade of difficulties like that," says Alan Thorne, a physical anthro-

pologist at the Australian National University in Canberra. "But in the end there was nothing I could do—and in fact, we're coming into a much better time, working collaboratively with the aborigines."

Collaboration does have limits, though,

and 2 weeks ago three aboriginal tribes told Thorne they wanted to take back from him skeletal material from Lake Mungo that is at least 35,000 years old, representing some of the oldest known Australians. "I suspect that they will want to rebury this material," he said after meeting tribal representatives, "although it has not been decided yet." The idea admittedly makes him "unhappy," but Thorne adds, "if that is the price we have to pay to be able to continue excavations and research, then we will do so."

Nor, he insists, does this spell the end for physical anthropology in Australia, for at other locales aborigines have asked him to study remains. Murray and Allen, too, although shut out of Tasmania, are working on other archaeological excavations with aborigines in the state of Victoria. "The aborigines here are inclusive," says Murray. "They want us to do this work, to help tell them about their history." But scientists elsewhere, from Canada to Egypt to Kenya, worry that the trend toward reburial will spread to their shores, giving local interests final say over ancestral remains once considered the heritage of all humanity.

—Virginia Morell

RUSSIAN SCIENCE

President's Council Lambastes Ministry

MOSCOW—The bitter struggle over control of Russian science, which has pitted the Ministry of Science and Technology Policy against the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), reached a new level late last month. At the first meeting of the Council on Scientific and Technological Policy—a powerful new committee headed by President Boris Yeltsin with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as vice chair—the ministry came under fire for its efforts to set up systems of peer review and competitive funding to support the country's active researchers. Some of the ministry's supporters in the Russian parliament, fearing that the attacks could spell the beginning of the end for the ministry, quickly launched a counteroffensive.

The broadside at the council meeting came from RAS President Yuri Osipov, who has long fought the ministry's efforts to give high priority to competitively awarded research funding at the expense of the old Soviet-style block funding system controlled by the RAS. During a lengthy discourse on the problems facing Russian science, Osipov said: "In late 1991 and 1992, evident attempts were undertaken to demolish the historically established pattern of organization of Russian science, which had proved its value, and to violently transplant it with Western models."

The real purpose of Osipov's attack became obvious at the end of his speech when

he called for the creation of a state committee for scientific and technological policy that would perform many of the functions currently carried out by the ministry. The committee would be presided over by "a prominent scientist and administrator ... who would deeply understand the problems of the development of science and technology in the interests of the state," Osipov said.

It is no surprise that the new council pro-

**There were attempts to
"violently transplant [the
Russian science system]
with Western models."**

—Yuri Osipov

vided a forum for the ministry's opponents. It was the brainchild of Nikolai Malyshev, Yeltsin's science adviser, who first tried to eliminate the science ministry in late 1993 (*Science*, 14 January 1994, p. 166), and its members include Osipov, four of his vice presidents, and the presidents of other academies. But Osipov's attack is causing considerable unease among supporters of the ministry and the scientific community.

Details of the meeting were leaked to a

Moscow newspaper several days before it was due to take place, prompting two members of the Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, to write to Yeltsin. Nikolai Vorontsov, chair of the Duma subcommittee on science, and Pavel Bunich, deputy chair of the committee on property, privatization, and economics, expressed support to the president for science minister Boris Saltykov.

Vorontsov is disturbed that powerful academy administrators hold so much sway with the government. He later told *Science* he thought Saltykov does a good job in supporting important scientific institutions outside the framework of the RAS, and took issue with Osipov's criticisms of Western-style funding models: "The peer review system is used not only in the West but also in the East and all over the world, so such accusations are totally inconsistent." Fedor Kiseliyov, head of the division of tumor-transforming genes at the Blokhin Cancer Research Center in Moscow, says he approves of the ministry's changes and welcomes its system of competitively awarded grants.

So far, there has been no indication that the government will act on Osipov's advice. But Vorontsov fears that if the RAS representatives on the powerful new council get their way, it will only lead to further bureaucratization of funding distribution.

—Andrey Allakhverdiv

Andrey Allakhverdiv is a writer in Moscow.