

NAE," he says. "Engineering in this country has not been getting the recognition that some people, including myself, think it should." As part of that effort, Liebowitz lobbied for a Watergate apartment to entertain distinguished guests. NAS President Bruce Alberts has the use of such an apartment, and Liebowitz says NAE should be on equal footing.

However, the council shot down Liebowitz's plea for the Watergate apartment, and it has shown little enthusiasm for his other ideas. "They would cost a great deal of money, and they haven't been fleshed out very well," complains one former NAE officer. For example, Liebowitz himself says the continuing education program he has in mind could cost \$6 million, although he declined to provide details on how the program would be set up. Such figures, and what they see as the slow pace of fund-raising, worry other officers and councilors. "The council is well aware that the president was elected by a majority, but it also has to make sure that the academy remains financially responsible," says Ostrach.

In his bid to raise the NAE's profile, Liebowitz also upset senior managers at the NAS and the National Research Council (NRC), the operating arm for the three institutions, by proposing that NAE conduct more of its own reviews and studies. That idea, say other academy sources, was viewed as a direct threat to the NRC, which relies on the three organizations for assignments and to raise the necessary money.

But the new president's approach to personnel matters was what really moved the council to act, according to academy sources. In particular, the council felt that Liebowitz was moving too slowly to fill several vacant fund-raising positions and objected to his plans to reshuffle senior NAE staff.

Lowering the boom. The council's concern came to a head on 26 September, when it approved six resolutions sharply limiting Liebowitz's authority, according to informed NAE sources. Liebowitz was told to obtain the approval of NAE Vice President Morris Tannenbaum—designated as the council's representative—for all hiring and firing of senior staff, to avoid undertaking programs in competition with the NRC, and to draw up a clear fund-raising plan. The other resolutions chided him for handing out citations without consulting the academy's award committee and requested him to be more prompt in submitting travel vouchers that documented how he had spent NAE's money. He also was directed to complete a conflict-of-interest form ensuring that his outside income did not conflict with his new position.

Less than a week after the council passed the resolutions, Liebowitz apparently sidestepped the directive on staffing in demoting NAE Executive Officer William Salmon,

NAE sources say. Salmon, who declined to comment, was later reinstated. The incident further strained relations between the council and the president, the sources say.

Both the president and some councilors insist that the resolutions, which they decline to disclose, are merely advice. But other sources say they are worded as directives. Either way, it's clear that the council felt it needed to send Liebowitz a message. As Bloch puts it: "Major institutions must undergo change, [but] the council wants to do this with consideration." The new power-sharing approach, he adds, will allow the council and president "to get used to each other."

Liebowitz says he welcomes advice and that the limitations are not unusual for a large organization. But he doesn't think the resolutions reflect great dissatisfaction with his conduct. He cites recent contracts with the Navy and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, totaling \$3 million, as evidence of his fiscal prowess. And he says he has "done everything possible to alleviate the fears of the staff" about his administrative policies. He admits that his ideas will cost money but says that "I think we can be imaginative and creative enough to offset that." And he has now signed the conflict-of-interest form and submitted his travel vouchers. Supporters like what they've seen so far. "There has been very positive change" since

Liebowitz took over, says Harris.

The NAE president acknowledges that he may have done a bad job describing his plans. In a 9 November letter to members that doesn't mention the council resolutions, he apologized for giving what struck many members as a rambling speech at the NAE annual meeting in September. "I pledge to concentrate on being a more effective communicator," he states. And in a move welcomed by the council, he has assembled a team to advise him on his presidency. NAE sources say the team's formation is an acknowledgment of his difficulty in managing the organization, but Liebowitz disagrees, saying that it is normal for a new president to seek help.

The big question, of course, is whether the two sides will patch up their differences. "There is not much doubt that if the president and council are at loggerheads, the council will win," says Frey. If the dispute continues, NAE members could be asked to vote on whether to oust Liebowitz, according to one academy source, but neither side seems eager to go public with their arguments.

In the meantime, Liebowitz says he's settling into a job he fought hard to win, and hasn't even had time to hang any pictures on his office walls. Asked if he plans to stay for a full, 6-year term, he smiles and answers coyly, "If you can guarantee my health."

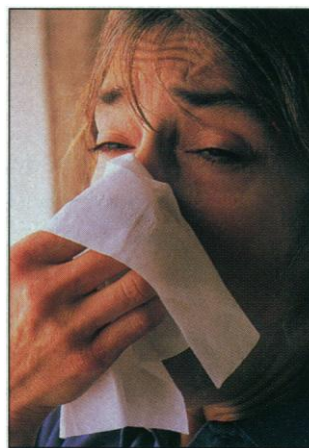
—Andrew Lawler

INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Planning for the Next Flu Pandemic

Everyone is familiar with the annual flu epidemic and the misery it brings. But every so often—four times this century, most recently in 1977—a particularly virulent new strain of flu virus will emerge that spreads quickly, erupting into a global epidemic with far more disease and deaths than usual. Last week, flu experts from around the world gathered in Bethesda, Maryland, to try to work out a game plan for coping with the next such pandemic. The last one was nearly 20 years ago, and warns virologist Robert Webster of St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis, "as time passes, the probability [of another] increases."

To counter that threat, the U.S. Federal Working Group on Influenza Pandemic Preparedness, with representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the military, is preparing a plan, a draft of which was re-



Coming soon? Occasionally, new flu strains arise that are even worse than usual.

leased at the meeting. As with similar plans being developed by other countries, its goal is to detect dangerous new strains of influenza A, the virus that causes the pandemics, as soon as they emerge, and put in place preventive measures, such as vaccination programs.

While the experts don't know exactly when the next flu pandemic will strike, planning is essential, they say, because when it does come, only very quick action will stem its spread. "You don't have 2 weeks time [to make decisions]," says Daniel Lavanchy of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva.

And failure to make them can be costly. The most notorious of the pandemics, the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, killed 20 mil-

* "Pandemic Influenza: Confronting a Re-Emergent Threat," National Institutes of Health, 11 to 13 December.

CONGRESS

Science Chair Walker Calls It Quits

lion people worldwide. Far fewer people died in subsequent flu pandemics, but global economic losses can be high. For example, the pandemics of 1957 and 1968 together cost some \$32 billion (in 1995 dollars) in lost productivity and medical expenses.

One priority of all the plans is surveillance, now carried out primarily through WHO. Influenza A is a versatile pathogen that switches hosts, hopping from aquatic birds to pigs to people. In pigs, genes from different subtypes of the virus can recombine to form new, more virulent or infectious strains that can then be transmitted to humans. Such transmission is a problem especially in places like rural China, where ducks, pigs, and people may be in close contact, and that's where many outbreaks originate. So for starters, the new U.S. proposal stresses the need to enhance CDC support of global monitoring for new subtypes of influenza A.

If a new strain is detected, the U.S. plan also recommends setting up a medical SWAT team that could go quickly to the outbreak site, and assess person-to-person transmission and the likelihood of a pandemic. Whether this would be an international team is uncertain, as not much international planning has been done yet.

Should a pandemic seem likely, the plan then calls for the U.S. president to set in motion an emergency program of purchasing and distributing vaccines to everyone in the United States, according to a predetermined priority system. That aspect of the plan worries officials from other countries, however, as they fear that a U.S. policy of vaccinating everyone might exacerbate shortages of vaccines. Not enough of the alternative, anti-viral medications that prevent infection, exist either. "We may easily have a mad scramble internationally for a limited supply of anti-viral agents," says Jane Leese, a medical officer at the Department of Health in London.

Other countries have more restricted plans. John Spika of the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control in Ottawa, Canada, says that his country plans to inoculate health care and community workers first, and then people at high risk of dying from flu. He hopes some vaccine will be leftover for the general public to buy.

To ensure that happens, Spika and other flu experts at this meeting called for greater international coordination of pandemic control measures. The U.S. plan, which is now being reviewed, revised, and expanded, also calls for global approaches. Its final draft, expected at the end of 1996, may come none too soon. The world will likely be spared a pandemic this season, but who knows what 1997 will bring.

—Elizabeth Pennisi

Elizabeth Pennisi is a science writer based in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Representative Robert Walker (R-PA), at the zenith of his career in Congress, last week apparently took to heart the old saw of quitting while you're ahead. The House Science Committee chair and close associate of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) surprised members of both parties when he announced that he will not seek re-election in 1996.

The congressman, who turns 53 next week, says there is no "hidden agenda" to his decision. "It's just time to move on," he told reporters at a sometimes emotional press conference that earned him a standing ovation from a dozen congressional colleagues. "In case there are any rumors, I'm in excellent political and physical health," he says. "Sometimes you have to take people at their word on why they do things—and I really do believe this is the right time for me to go do something else with my life."

White House Science Adviser Jack Gibbons, a partisan foe on many research issues this year as Democrats fought to preserve technology and environmental programs that Republicans opposed, had only kind words for Walker after hearing the news. "I am sorry I will not have the opportunity to continue working with him in the next Congress," he said. "He has been a strong advocate for science, and the research community will miss his support."

Walker's departure from the House, after 20 years in office, will leave a large gap among the ranks of lawmakers with a serious interest in scientific and technological issues. Named chair last December after the Republican takeover of both houses, Walker presides over a 50-person panel that oversees everything from planetary science to undersea research. In a recent interview with *Science*, he said he reveled in his ability to set the science policy agenda after so many years in the minority (*Science*, 11 August, p. 749).

In his role as chair, he proved a staunch defender of basic research, fighting Budget Committee Chair John Kasich (R-OH) to preserve funding for science in the Republicans' 7-year plan to eliminate the federal deficit. At the same time, he pushed to cut spending for many programs favored by Gibbons and the White House. He also called for consolidating the roles of the current science agencies into a single Department of Science—a proposal spurned by the White House and omitted by Republican budgeteers.

If Republicans hold on to the House in the 1996 elections, Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who now chairs the science panel's space subcommittee, stands to take over Walker's job. Although the two have clashed over issues such as the nature of Russian participation in the international space station, Walker said "I have no doubt that we would have a very good experience" with Sensenbrenner as chair. Under Sensenbrenner, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) could

expect kinder treatment of its Mission to Planet Earth, although the congressman and NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin have sparred over NASA policies toward the space station and shuttle. However, relations with the White House might be better under Sensenbrenner.

Sensenbrenner said later that he wants the job, but according to congressional sources he also covets a more senior slot on the prestigious Judiciary Committee. Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), a moderate, is next in seniority on the Science Committee. If the

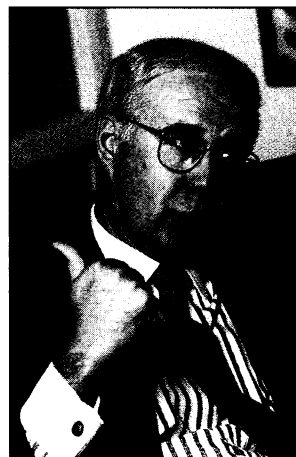
Democrats win, then Representative George Brown (D-CA) would likely retake his old job, assuming he survives yet another tough re-election campaign.

Walker said that announcing his decision 4 months before his state's primary election is intended to give Republicans in his rural Pennsylvania district sufficient time to find a strong replacement. He and his wife made the decision last weekend but kept it a secret until a day before the announcement.

Congressional aides say that Walker remains an atypical politician even though he has worked on Capitol Hill for 30 years, first as a staffer. "He's an intellectual, he's quirky, and he's not a fire-breathing legislator," one Republican staffer says. "He's an incredibly talented and strong leader," says a Democratic staffer, who notes that his path to advancement in the House likely was shut when he lost his bid to become whip, the number three post in the Republican hierarchy.

But Walker still has access to the inner sanctums of House Republican leadership for another year, and he pledged to help put a Republican president in the White House. If that happens, he could be in line for a heavyweight slot in a new Administration—perhaps even one in close touch with science.

—Andrew Lawler



Next. Rep. Walker says he wants to "do something else."