

into the organization's books. "We had no reason to criticize," Schwartzberg told *Science*, "because each year the association grew more prosperous, and each year there was more money for research programs." Maxime Schwartz, director-general of the Pasteur Institute, agrees: "The scientific community was very happy to have a source of financing, and the majority did not want to look further."

Schwartzberg and other members of the council say they were surprised to read the auditing court's findings that only about 27% of the money raised by ARC was being given directly to research (as opposed to cancer prevention programs and administrative costs), because Crozemarie had stated publicly many times that the figure was roughly 50%. "He hid a number of things from us," Schwartzberg says, claiming in particular that budget figures presented to the board were not clear about the way the money was divided up. (Requests from *Science* to Crozemarie's attorney for an interview with ARC's former president or responses to these and other accusations have gone unanswered.)

Pierre Tambourin, director of the CNRS's life sciences department and the agency's representative on the council, claims that for a time Crozemarie even kept the auditing court's findings from the council. At the council's meeting of 21 June 1995, Tambourin told *Science*, he asked Crozemarie if he had received the court's preliminary report. "He said this report had not yet arrived," Tambourin says, an account that Schwartzberg confirms. But Tambourin later learned that Crozemarie received the preliminary report many days earlier. The court's final report, a copy of which has been obtained by *Science*, states that the preliminary report was transmitted to ARC's president on 8 June.

There may be some question about what the council knew, and when it knew it, but there's no doubt that the French government had been well aware of concerns about ARC for a long time. Lucas and his IGAS inspectors had prepared three reports critical of ARC since 1984. Lucas told *Science* that his last report—which was written in 1991 but did not become public until it was leaked by the French daily *Le Monde* in late 1994—was submitted directly to the health minister at the time.

Lucas says he is prepared to continue as ARC president as long as he is needed. He adds that he wants to "renew things and send a clear message to the public" about his desire to change the way ARC functions. In that spirit, he says he is hoping for "about a dozen resignations" at the next meeting of the administrative council, scheduled for 14 February. That would be good news to researchers like Pierre Chambon. "We don't want the public to believe French scientists were involved in this scandal, because it's not true," he says.

—Michael Balter

CLINICAL RESEARCH

NIH Clinical Center Gets a Boost

In its glory days, the big hospital at the National Institutes of Health—called the NIH clinical center—was unrivaled. By the mid-1990s, though, the 1953-vintage research powerhouse had fallen on hard times. Costs were rising; patient enrollment was on the decline; intractable management problems were growing worse. The physical plant itself had begun to fall apart, and fixing it had been on NIH's agenda for a decade. This week, however, the center's prospects picked up with the release of a report that lays out a new structure to manage clinical research there, and a promise from Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Donna Shalala to request funds to start building a new hospital.

Part of the impetus for this turn of events came from a suggestion that virtually nobody among the top brass at NIH or HHS seemed to like: Last year, a panel of the vice president's "reinventing government" campaign said NIH should fix its clinical center by privatizing it—by using private contractors to manage the research. NIH leaders feared that hiring outsiders to run an operation that is at the heart of NIH's research enterprise would entangle them more, not less, in the coils of the federal bureaucracy. So NIH's overseers at HHS set out to find a better solution. Last March, Shalala commissioned an independent panel to review plans for the center and develop a better management system (*Science*, 7 April 1995, p. 20). This review, chaired by Helen Smits, deputy director of HHS's Health Care Financing Administration, has now sent its recommendations to Shalala.

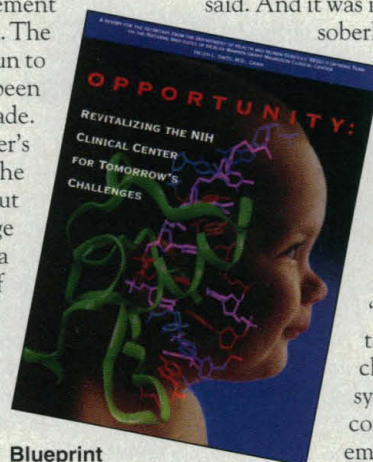
The Smits report, which is being released this week, concludes that the center should not be privatized. Instead, the report says, NIH should create a new, centralized management structure headed by a governing board of 15 members, nine of them from outside government. The panel, which gathered helpful tips from visits to 30 top-ranked hospitals and clinics around the country, also recommends that the center have "a clearly defined budget of its own," and that it be granted exemptions from federal purchasing and personnel rules to increase its flexibility. As the first order of business, it urged the center to develop a strategic plan and to seek the privileges of a federal "reinvention laboratory," which would exempt it from certain procurement and hiring regulations.

In the past, Smits says, the center was a collection of fiefdoms run by separate institute chiefs, overseen by a series of committees that made decisions by consensus. The process was reminiscent of what you might find "in an Oxford common room," Smits said. And it was inefficient. The report notes soberly that this governance system suffers from a "lack of clarity," that its budget process is "unwieldy," and that planning is poor or nonexistent. In addition, the report found the clinical center's purchasing systems—hampered by government regulations—to be "time-consuming, labor-intensive, costly, and slow to change." As for the personnel system, the report said it is "so complex that managers and employees find it difficult to understand."

In a meeting with *Science* last week, Shalala gave the Smits report an unqualified endorsement. Shalala says she would like NIH to move ahead quickly on these recommendations, which have already been given a nod by NIH Director Harold Varmus. Shalala also told *Science* she will be asking Congress for funds to start construction of a new building for the clinical center in the 1997 budget. This new hospital—which will take 4 years to complete—would be smaller than the present one, with 250 beds instead of 450. But Shalala says it would be more "flexible," housing a wider variety of clinics and research labs.

Shalala acknowledged that HHS's decision to conduct an independent review of the clinical center had ruffled some feathers—but she added that this was a good thing. "There's nothing wrong with shaking up the system," she said. Originally, "When people came in to tell me what the new [clinical center] building was going to be," she said, "it was clear there was no strategic plan; they just told me how much it would cost and how many beds there would be." Shalala said she had no qualms about asking NIH to do a better job of justifying its plans. In 1995, she noted, "everybody was talking about privatization," and "the [NIH] institute directors were scared to death." But she believed that if she asked an independent group to develop a thoughtful plan, "at the end of the process [the institute directors] would say it was worthwhile."

Shalala's strategy may have worked, judging by the initial responses of NIH offi-



Blueprint for reform. The Smits report argues against privatization.

cials. John Gallin, who was chosen by Varmus in 1994 as clinical center director, said: "If you had asked me a year ago what would happen, I would not have expected this outcome; I'm very pleased. ... The outside group [of hospital finance experts who consulted with the Smits panel] made a lot of constructive suggestions." Likewise, Gregory Curt, the chief intramural clinical officer at the National Cancer In-

stitute, which uses 40% of the clinical center's capacity, welcomed the report. The panel, Curt said, cut "right to the heart of everything—governance." He supports the panel's recommendation that the clinical center be run by a unified management structure rather than a series of institute representatives.

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases,

the second largest user of the clinical center, gave the report a qualified vote of confidence. "I'm in favor of the general philosophy and theme" of the recommendations. However, Fauci said he's eager to read the fine print. He's still uncertain whether it's a good idea to give the clinical center an independent budget, but says, "if that gives it true stability, then I'm for it."

—Eliot Marshall

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Showdown at the UC Corral

BERKELEY—Like gunslingers in the Old West, University of California President Richard Atkinson faced off last week with California's governor and the UC board of regents. The issue: how quickly Atkinson was willing to implement a new race- and gender-blind admissions policy the regents had ordered. For a day or two, it looked like Atkinson's move might cost him his job. But after a tense standoff, both sides blinked and backed down.

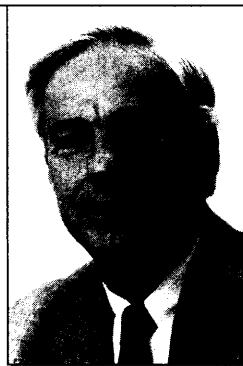
Atkinson, a psychologist, was caught between the views of UC's faculty and chancellors and the will of its governing board of regents on the issue of affirmative action. When he left his position as chancellor of UC San Diego to take the UC presidency last fall, the university system was already under orders by the regents to dismantle race and gender preferences in admitting students, beginning with the entering class of 1997. Atkinson, the nine chancellors, and much of the UC faculty had opposed the policy, but as president, Atkinson was obligated to implement it.

The face-off began on 23 January, when Atkinson announced that the university couldn't possibly have the policy in place for the entering class of 1997, but would require an additional year. That delay was cheered by faculty opposed to the new plan, but viewed as insubordination by a number of the regents, including the board's president, California Governor Pete Wilson—whose anti-affirmative action stance was a central element in his unsuccessful presidential campaign. Atkinson was summoned to the governor's office, but he refused to change his position. That prompted 10 of the 26 regents, led by Ward Connerly, a black businessman and staunch affirmative action opponent, to call a special regents' meeting for 31 January to review Atkinson's performance as UC president.

The meeting never took place, however, because Atkinson quickly softened his truculent stance, apologized for not consulting the regents on the scheduling change, and proposed that UC could have the new policy in place 6 months earlier than he had previously said, in time for the admission

of midyear transfer students in the spring of 1998. The first full class to be admitted under the new policy would be the entering class of fall 1988, as Atkinson originally proposed.

It appears that the regents may accept that compromise when they hold their next scheduled meeting on 15 February. Connerly, who of all the regents took the most umbrage at Atkinson's stance, says he will vote for Atkinson's spring '98 date. He added, however, that he is willing to go along "more in the spirit of compromise" than in the belief



Caught in the crossfire. UC President Richard Atkinson.

the university really needs the extra time.

"Affirmative action really became a proxy for the issue of governance," as Atkinson and the regents jockeyed for decision-making power, says Patrick Callan, executive director of the San Jose-based California Higher Education Policy Center. And as the UC regents seem likely to continue taking a more activist role in setting university policy than they have in the past, there may be more such encounters in President Atkinson's future.

—Marcia Barinaga

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Two Eyes Are Better Than One

The sharing of scientific information between Russian and U.S. researchers has become almost routine since the end of the Cold War, except for one area: oceanographic and environmental data collected by spy satellites. Last week, however, the veil began to lift when officials from both countries announced an exchange of maps made from photos that record petrochemical hazards at the other country's military air bases. And for good measure, they revealed plans for a joint naval oceanographic survey next summer.

The announcement came from a working group formed last summer to find ways for Russia and the United States to exchange security data useful for environmental research (*Science*, 28 July 1995, p. 473). The maps, which will be used for environmental cleanups, are the first installment. They show Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and Yeysk Air Force Base near the Black Sea in southern Russia, and reveal such features as fuel storage areas and water pathways for oil spills. The maps were constructed from "data you never even admitted you were looking at," says a U.S. official. More important, notes National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Director James Baker, who is leading the U.S. team, there's "a process actually delivering information for

the first time between the U.S. and Russia."

The joint oceanographic survey announced last week will move the process along. It will take place this summer in the Sea of Okhotsk, off Russia's east coast. Although one goal is to become familiar with the other side's data collection techniques and smooth the way for future data exchanges, the cruise will also explore circulation patterns in the sea and its role in absorbing carbon dioxide.

The two sides are also moving forward with previously announced projects to disseminate U.S. cloud data accumulated over a 30-year period by Russian satellites and to share decades of information on Arctic ice conditions and circulation. A demonstration data hookup for a system to exchange current satellite information on environmental hazards such as forest fires, volcanoes, and oil spills should be ready for the commission's next meeting in June, says Robert Winokur, NOAA's assistant administrator for satellite and information services.

Ultimately, it may be dollars rather than lingering Cold War suspicions that limit cooperation. "There is no shortage of projects," says Baker. "The problem is that we both have limited funding."

—Jocelyn Kaiser