to all new researchers, while those who receive a positive evaluation when their contract expires will be eligible for a 5-year renewal. The Electrotechnical Laboratories (ETL), also in Tsukuba, plan to offer researchers a choice of a permanent track or a 5-year contract. Researchers opting for contracts are likely to get higher salaries and other perquisites.

Reformers think these changes are the key to improving the quality of research. "We have to have some kind of selection of scientists," says Michio Oishi, NIBH's director. ETL Director-General Koichiro Tamura notes that greater fluidity should create career options for scientists who previously would have had to stay "buried" in a single institute.

Limited-term appointments have been discussed for several years, but none of the national universities or national labs under other ministries has moved away from lifetime employment (*Science*, 15 March, p. 1492). Oishi, previously a professor of molecular biology at the University of Tokyo, has long urged the university to introduce some sort of tenurelike system. But the need for consensus among the faculty, he says, is a hindrance to innovation.

In contrast, he says, the lines of authority at AIST are drawn more clearly. "I just gathered a few other [institute officials], and we decided," Oishi says. AIST's Hirata admits that not all of the institute heads are as enthusiastic about limited terms as Oishi is. But Hirata expects all 15 institutes to adopt some form of limited-term employment within the next few years after "strong encouragement" from AIST.

A second major change is to make funding more competitive. Each AIST researcher now gets a nominal budget for his or her own research, and a lump sum goes to each institute to distribute as it sees fit. Hirata says the agency is now planning a third budget category for competitive proposals, to be judged by a committee of leading researchers. AIST hopes to fund 20 or so projects at an average of $1 million each. "If one institute takes everything, that's OK," says Hirata. "It depends on their proposals."

AIST is studying a number of other reforms. One suggestion, in line with moves at other ministries, would allow AIST labs to hire sorely needed technicians and assistants. The agency also plans to give researchers a greater share of the fruits of their labor. Currently, individual researchers may receive only 10% of intellectual property income, to a maximum of $55,000. AIST hopes to increase this percentage to 50% and to scrap the ceiling. Another significant policy change under consideration would allow researchers to form venture businesses or to advise private companies. The goal of all these reforms, says Hirata, is a desire "to stimulate the environment for research."

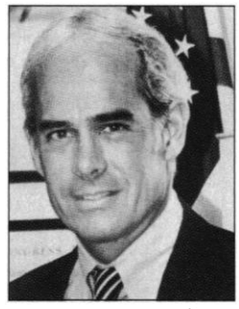
–Dennis Normile

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Congress: Biomedical Research Wins Big

Biomedical research scored a "100% win" on Capitol Hill, as one lobbyist says, in the massive 1997 appropriation bill that passed Congress last week. A few other research agencies also did fairly well in the last-minute scramble for funds, as members of Congress bundled all their unfinished business into one piece of legislation and rushed home to campaign for re-election.

The new law gives the National Institutes of Health (NIH) an increase of 6.9% in 1997—nearly double the growth rate the Administration requested—and launches a new prostate cancer research effort in the Department of Defense. It also provides more money than initially expected for two key research agencies in the Commerce Department, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NIST officials are happy that their fund for innovative industrial R&D known as the Advanced Technology Program (ATP) not only survived Republican attacks but won a $4 million increase to a budget of $221 million.



Winning plaudits. NIH supporter Representative John Porter.

Congress wrapped all these decisions into a jumbo omnibus appropriation bill on 30 September, the last day of fiscal 1996. (Other science budgets were approved earlier.) Long before that deadline, though, Republican leaders had bowed to White House demands on some of the main issues. Most importantly, they had approved $6.5 billion in spending on education and social programs sought by President Bill Clinton. That took the pressure off the NIH budget, which might otherwise have been squeezed to help pay for those programs. The president dropped his threat of a veto.

The bill gives NIH everything it could reasonably hope for—and more. Congress increased NIH's budget from $11.9 billion in 1996 to $12.7 billion in 1997, to a level that is more than $330 million higher than what the Clinton Administration or the Senate had proposed. Congressional aides and biomedical lobbyists give much of the credit for this remarkable increase to Representative John Porter (R–IL), chair of the House appropriations subcommittee that oversees NIH's budget.

After consulting biomedical groups such as the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), Porter set a target to achieve a 6.5% rate of growth for "core research" at NIH. That is the goal the House adopted and Congress finally approved. This reflects the "strong bipartisan support in Congress for biomedicine," says FASEB President John Suttie, chair of biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. And "the fact that [Porter] was able to maintain the House number in the conference committee illustrates his tremendous support for this cause—which we're very appreciative of," says Suttie. He adds: "I don't think that many people 6 months ago would have thought it possible."

In addition to a record level of research funding, the bill contains another major milestone for NIH: Congress voted $90 million as a first-year installment on the $310 million cost of renovating NIH's hospital, which will include a new building named after Mark O. Hatfield (R–OR), chair of the Senate appropriations committee. (Hatfield, a longtime backer of biomedical research, is retiring this year.)

And it was not just NIH that emerged with a big increase in funds for biomedical research. Congress expanded a research program on breast cancer in the Department of Defense budget, increasing it from $70 million to $100 million, while setting aside another $45 million to start a new program of prostate cancer research.

Porter was partially successful in stripping the law of "earmarks" for targeted programs at NIH. He failed, however, to reduce a set-aside for small business grants (see *Science*, 17 May, p. 942). And he settled for a compromise on earmarked funds for AIDS research. Porter and some conservative legislators wanted to reverse a policy that gave the NIH Office of AIDS Research (OAR) authority to direct NIH spending in this area. The new bill goes partway in that direction: It creates no "line item" for AIDS research. But it uses language in a committee report to give OAR most of the control over AIDS funding it would have received under the previous law, and an "estimated" budget of $1.5 billion. The OAR director and NIH director get joint authority to shift up to 3% of this money from one institute to another. This face-saving remedy placated all parties.

No other science agency came close to

NIH's increase. But some programs fared a lot better than expected. Take the controversial ATP program. Earlier this year, the House cut ATP's budget from $221 million in 1996 to $111 million next year, and the Senate chopped it to $60 million. But the program emerged from a House-Senate conference with a 1997 budget of $225 million. And lawmakers didn't stop there: They also lifted restrictions the House sought to impose on funding large companies.

ATP's supporters credit a combined push by the White House and industry for the remarkable turnaround in ATP's fortunes. Kathleen Kingscott, an IBM official and chair of the Coalition for Technology Partnerships, called the result "a great victory" that showed that Clinton "went to bat" for the program. "We're very gratified industry has been strongly behind this," says Henry Kelly, assistant director for technology at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

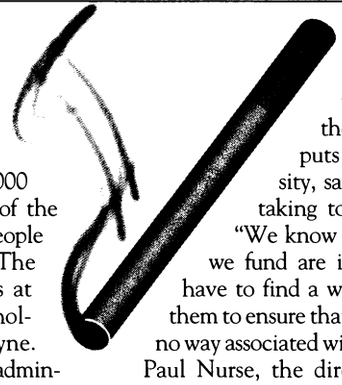
The news is not so rosy for NIST's effort to upgrade its aging facilities, however. Congress denied the agency's $105 million construction request and took away an additional $16 million that remained unspent from last year. While there will be enough money to complete the $184 million Advanced Chemical Sciences Laboratory in Gaithersburg, Maryland, the budget cut will put an indefinite hold on plans to build an Advanced Technology Laboratory and spruce up older facilities. "It's a very bad development," says one NIST official.

NOAA did not grow, but it didn't suffer great losses either, receiving a $1.92 billion budget, slightly less than the 1996 level. Despite Republican criticism of NOAA's climate research programs, the House-Senate conferees added $2 million to the 1996 budget for interannual and seasonal climate change studies and $1 million to the $27 million long-term climate and air quality research. Given that House Republicans took power in 1995 with ambitious plans to scale back this research, eliminate ATP, and do away with the Commerce Department altogether, the 104th Congress that began with a bang appears to be ending with a whimper.

–Eliot Marshall and Andrew Lawler

U.K. SCIENCE FUNDING

Tobacco Funding Debate Smolders



Britain's medical research establishment has been embroiled in a row that's been smoldering since early summer over the propriety of accepting research funds from the tobacco industry. And there is no sign that the smoke is clearing. Last week, two major funding organizations, the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Cancer Research Campaign (CRC), were expected to announce policies on tobacco funding. Instead, they issued separate statements saying that they need more time to study the issues.

The row broke out earlier this year when senior staff members at Cambridge University voted by a 2-to-1 margin to accept a $2.5 million donation from the world's second-largest tobacco company, British American Tobacco (BAT) Industries. The funds will support a new professorship in international relations to be named after the former company chair, Sir Patrick Sheehy. The decision outraged many of Britain's medical researchers. Walter Bodmer, former director-general of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF), described Cambridge's decision to accept the funds as "quite appalling." Oxford University's Richard Peto, an expert on smoking and diseases, says: "British American Tobacco ... has to spend a lot of money buying good will. I'm sorry that Cambridge did not have the sense to turn down the tobacco-industry money."

But the CRC, a medical charity that spends $70 million each year on research—including $3.8 million at the University of Cambridge—took the hardest line: It threatened to halt future funding for Cambridge scientists. Gordon McVie, the campaign's director-general, said he was "bitterly disappointed" that the university had decided to accept BAT's money and promised that a decision on CRC's relations with the university would be announced after a council meeting last week.

The government-funded MRC, meanwhile, was drawn into the row over tobacco funding when media reports earlier this year revealed that it had accepted $220,000 from BAT last year for a study of the potential benefits of nicotine in people at risk of Alzheimer's disease. The money was given to researchers at the MRC's Neurochemical Pathology Unit in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Nicholas Winterton, the MRC's administrative secretary, defended the council's decision to take the money, saying the cash had been accepted under a clear framework that outside funding must not influence the science.

The decision sparked criticism not only from outside but also inside the organization. Mary Rice, head of public relations, told reporters that she had warned that the decision would seriously damage the MRC's reputation as an impartial source of scientific knowledge, but her views were overruled. The MRC fanned the flames when it suspended Rice for her comments—a move described as "outrageous" by the tobacco-control pressure group, Action on Smoking and Health. Like the CRC, the MRC also promised that it would review its policies on such funding at a council meeting last week.

Both councils said, however, that they need to do more homework. "We know what our supporters think, and we sense growing public hostility to the tobacco companies, but we need a thorough study," says McVie. Jane Lee, head of corporate affairs at the MRC, said that many views had been raised at last week's private meeting, but no new policy emerged. She said the council will be looking again at the issues, and until then, "current policy stands." Rice remains suspended, and the research at Newcastle is also continuing with tobacco-industry funds.

The CRC's next step will be to develop a new code to ensure that its grants and intellectual scientific property are not "tainted with tobacco money," as the campaign's statement puts it. Cambridge University, says McVie, isn't alone in taking tobacco-industry funding. "We know many of the institutions we fund are involved," he says. "We have to find a way of dealing with all of them to ensure that the CRC is seen to be in no way associated with the tobacco industry." Paul Nurse, the director general of ICRF, which employs its own scientists and doctors and does not provide any grants for research at Cambridge, welcomed CRC efforts to distance its grants and research from tobacco money. "We sympathize with hard-pressed universities who are desperate for funds," Nurse said, "but we urge any institution to resist the siren voices of the tobacco industry."

The CRC also intends to commission a major new study to assess public knowledge of and attitudes toward the tobacco industry. It hopes the results will help provide support for taking a tough stand on academic institutions that enter deals with controversial partners. "Without public support we would raise no funds," McVie says. And he insists that Cambridge is not yet off the hook: "It and many other universities may face difficulties, but we will be developing the code in consultation with them." David Williams, vice chancellor of Cambridge University, warmly welcomed the CRC's statement. He is confident the university "would wish to cooperate with the proposed courses of action," he said.

McVie hopes the CRC's code will carry clout across all the British medical research charities, which currently spend more than three times as much as the MRC does on research, and even with the MRC itself. "I want to move quickly but would like to make sure we get it right," he says.

–Nigel Williams