NEWS & NOTES

• **ROGERS REVIEWS CANCER PLAN**: It appears now that the Administration-backed bill calling for an independent Conquest of Cancer Agency, which swept the Senate 79–1, is in for a rougher ride through Congress than had been anticipated. Representative Paul Rogers (D–Fla.), chairman of the House health subcommittee, says his subcommittee has started 3 weeks of hearings on the bill, during which a wide range of scientists who oppose the Senate-passed measure will testify. Rogers and five members of his subcommittee have introduced an alternate bill that would strengthen cancer research within NIH's National Cancer Institute. Those who oppose the separate authority, which would be nominally within NIH but would report directly to the President, believe that such an arrangement would fragment NIH research efforts and merely create a new bureaucracy (or "monstrosity," as Rogers termed it). Many legislators have supported the Senate measure for fear that opposing it would brand them as "pro-cancer"; further airing of the matter may permit second thoughts.

• **KNOWLES TO ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION**: John H. Knowles, whose politics cost him the nation's top health post 2 years ago, has been named president of the Rockefeller Foundation. He will succeed J. George Harrar, an early leader in the "green revolution," who will retire in December. Knowles, an outspoken liberal on public issues as well as medicine, has been general director of Massachusetts General Hospital since 1962. Knowles was nominated as HEW's assistant secretary for health and scientific affairs in 1969, but pressure from conservative Republicans and the American Medical Association caused the nomination to be dropped. He will assume leadership of the nation's second-largest foundation next July.

• **OFF-SEASON AT WOODS HOLE**: The Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole has announced the completion of a dormitory and dining complex that will enable it to accommodate conferences of about 200 persons, as well as winter visitors who would like to make use of the library facilities. For details, scientists may write Homer P. Smith, General Manager, MBL, Woods Hole, Massachusetts 02543.

Both Gilden and Old have this experiment under way. Old's laboratory is also trying to find out whether the surface antigens of the ESP-1 virus resemble those of mouse leukemia virus.

The new data obtained by Old, together with other new results, were presented on 31 August at a round table conference of the scientists involved in the debate. One participant, Wade P. Parks, believes that the advocates of a mouse origin for the virus carried the day. But Leon Dmochowski, speaking last week from Padua (where many of the principals in the ESP-1 debate are attending a symposium on leukemia), noted that the outcome of the round table conference was a decision to continue the work on the ESP-1 virus. Gilden's results were interesting, Dmochowski says, but in order to demonstrate the antibody-antigen reaction the Gilden and Parks teams had to resort to "drastic methods" and even then were able to find, by using extremely high concentrations of virus, only a trace of gs-1 antigen. "In our opinion such a reaction may be entirely nonspecific," Dmochowski says.

He and Priori have accumulated several new results suggesting that ESP-1 virus differs importantly from the mouse leukemia virus. For example, serums from tumor patients give an immunological reaction with ESP-1 cells, but not with human cells infected with mouse leukemia virus. Also antiserums against mouse gs-1 react with human cells infected with mouse virus but fails to coat ESP-1 cells.

Another result suggesting that ESP-1 virus differs from mouse leukemia virus is the finding by Gallo and Sarin, announced last week at the Padua conference, that the reverse transcriptase enzyme of ESP-1 virus differs from that of the mouse leukemia viruses. Gallo's evidence is that antibody raised against the latter class of enzymes fails to inactivate the enzyme of ESP-1 virus.

The debate on the origin of ESP-1 virus thus remains unresolved; it is still on the cards that the Houston group has uncovered a human virus, or at least a new kind of C-type particle, although for the time being the most likely hypothesis must be that of contamination. An obvious issue is why the Houston group did not delay the announcement of their results until the issue raised by Gilden had been clarified. "That is the $64,000 question," says Dmochowski, who feels that the Gilden group was unreasonably reluctant to show him their results. (The results seem to have become available some time between the publication of the two papers by the Houston group.) Having studied the ESP-1 cell line for more than a year and with other laboratories already at work on the ESP-1 virus, the Houston group was doubtless anxious to establish its priority, and after the negative results from Old's laboratory the reasons for delay must have seemed less compelling than the need to announce a finding of potentially great importance to cancer workers and cancer sufferers. Nevertheless, the initial hopes raised by the announcement are now not so high as they were. Will science be harmed in the public eye by such oscillations of confidence? "It ought to be, if Congress is watching," says Wallace P. Rowe, virology chief at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; "The field is moving at such a fast clip that everyone is forced into this quick draw type of publication." But other scientists, such as Sol Spiegelman of the Columbia University Institute of Cancer Research, believe that little if any harm has been done. Spiegelman, who considers the ESP-1 issue still unresolved, says that rapid publication is justified in cancer research because of the urgency of finding a causal agent.

Dmochowski, for his part, is unbowed in adversity. In 1956 he detected C-type particles in a leukemia patient but was unable to repeat the observation for another 6 years. "That was a long time to stand up like a sore thumb," Dmochowski says. "Maybe history is now repeating itself but I'm not yet sure."—NICHOLAS WADE

APPOINTMENTS

Albert W. Cook, associate professor of neurosurgery, Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York, to chairman, neurosurgery department at the center. **Thomas G. Baffes**, clinical professor of surgery, University of Health Sciences/The Chicago Medical School, to chairman, surgery department at the institutions. . . . **Martin R. Baron**, professor of psychology, Kent State University, to chairman, psychology department, University of Louisville. . . . **William V. D'Antonio**, chairman, sociology department, University of Notre Dame, to chairman, sociology department, University of Connecticut.