

## Woods Hole: Winterizing the Marine Biological Laboratory

Ever since its founding in 1888, the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) at Woods Hole on the southern edge of Cape Cod has been dedicated to the summer scientist. It was created expressly for the purpose of providing biologists resources for summer research in the rich marine environment of the area which is abundant in an unusual variety of flora and fauna because of the influence of the Gulf Stream from the south and the Labrador Current from the north.

The MBL's sense of itself as a summer place has always been quite explicit and its "annual announcement" makes reference to its policy of summer scientists first. What it has said is that even though it is all right to allow a few scientists to stay at the laboratory during the fall, winter, or spring months, they must not occupy the place at the expense of the summer scholars and students. "It is recognized," the announcement said not long ago, "that long-term commitments of space on a full year-round basis will curtail facilities available for assignment to biologists during the summer. Therefore, the aggregate of such commitments at any one time should be limited so as not to tie up a significant portion of the research space. . . ."

Today, that position is changing. Although there is little desire to see the MBL converted to a year-round facility on a major scale, for a number of reasons the officers and trustees of the laboratory have decided now to try actively to expand the dimensions of the year-round program. "The MBL has begun an intensive effort to attract year-round investigators of international stature," says James Ebert of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who is currently the MBL's director.

Ironically, one of the first measures of success in that drive became apparent recently when Edward F. MacNichol, Jr., announced that he will resign as director of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS) to move to Woods Hole and the MBL. MacNichol, a respected biophysicist who was at Johns Hopkins before taking the administrative slot at NINDS, has frequently spent his summers in Woods Hole where the resources of the MBL have particularly suited his research in the physiology of the receptor system of the eye. He switched from Hopkins to NINDS with the understanding that he would continue to devote a reasonable portion of his time to research and, he thought, with the understanding that his summer sojourns to the Woods Hole laboratory could continue.

Last year, this practice got him into trouble when an anonymous critic charged that he was mispending federal funds by collecting a \$25 per diem during the two months, stay away from his Bethesda office (*Science*, 8 October 1971). MacNichol was eventually cleared of charges of wrongdoing after the government's General Accounting Office spent several weeks going over his records, but the situation was embarrassing to both MacNichol and the National Institutes of Health, of which NINDS is a part. Now, MacNichol will be able to work and live at Woods Hole without the glare of publicity to which government officials are subject.

"For the last 4 years, I've been so engaged in administration and public relations that I've had very little time for science," he says, "and I'm not sure what kind of work I'll pursue at the MBL. I'll probably spend the first six months in the library catching up while I decide which research project to work on." MacNichol has agreed to spend about a quarter of his time on administration at the MBL, the rest on research after he arrives sometime before next July.

According to Ebert, the MBL stands to gain particularly in two regards by MacNichol's full-time residence. "We are looking forward to his applying the knowledge gained as a government scientist-administrator in assessing the MBL with its administrative problems," he says. One area in which the laboratory could use help is in raising money. "The lab is trying to turn itself around at the worst possible time financially," Ebert commented. In addition to funds that individual researchers such as MacNichol can be expected to bring with them for their own projects, the lab is seeking bloc support from federal and private funding agencies.

The second regard in which MacNichol is expected to make a difference to the laboratory is in its neurosciences program, one of the strongest during the summer but, nonetheless, a bit weak in electronics, in Ebert's view. "MacNichol is very strong in this field," he says, "and we're lucky to get him."

There are a few other full-time scientists at the Woods Hole laboratory—Albert Szent-Györgyi of the Institute for Muscle Research being the most famous—but MacNichol is the first new investigator to join the staff in this period of new interest in year-round activity. Ebert hopes that within the next 5 years, there may be as many as 30 principal investigators on staff full time. (During the summer, there are about 600 scientists and students in residence.)

In addition to buttressing its work in neurosciences, Ebert would like to see the laboratory expand its efforts in ecological research, tackling the problems of the salt marsh and estuary in particular, and he is looking for a "key environmental scientist" to come to head such a program. The MBL, he feels, could contribute substantially in this area—"one in which there is very little *real* research."

Speaking of the desire to open up the MBL to more year-round activity—perhaps an expansion of 10 to 15 percent of its current level—Ebert says it is no longer tolerable to allow the excellent facilities of the laboratory to sit vacant when there are scientists who need them and when the nation so badly needs the kind of research they can offer, especially in the environmental sciences. In addition, he thinks that a first-class year-round program will strengthen the summer program, with increasing competition for spaces stimulating renewed research efforts.

Another thing the MBL needs, he says, is a full-time director, "someone to replace me." The directorship has always been a part-time position, but that too may change.—BARBARA J. CULLITON