of three windmills produced by Boeing and rated at 2.5 megawatts each; with a wingspan of 300 feet, they will be the largest ever built and the first to be tested together. Construction will occur on the Oregon-Washington border, with the output fed into the grid of the Bonneville Power Administration. Boeing estimates its machine will be competitive in mass production with the anticipated cost of oil. And DOE says its final demonstration projects will cost 50 percent less than that.

An even more aggressive federal program would be authorized by legislation currently snarled in the House-Senate synfuels conference committee. The Senate-passed energy bill calls for low-interest loans subsidizing the difference in cost between wind and conventional energy through 1986, when costs for wind are expected to be equivalent or better. The House, in a far more ambitious proposal, determines that 800 megawatts of wind energy will be available by 1988, and provides for purchase subsidies of 50 percent or less in order to reach that goal. Subsidies would total $24 million for about 9000 wind machines, and $348 million for about 360 intermediate and large machines—numbers that make the present effort look quite small. Included in the bill is approximately $300 million for additional research.

The idea behind the bill is simply that once a firm can build either 1000 small turbines or 100 large ones, costs will decrease rapidly. According to Louis Divone, director of the wind program at DOE, "The advantage of the bill is that it tells the industry what the minimum market would be between now and 1988, enabling it to raise working capital; it also shows how much better the firms must do in order to stay in business by the time the subsidies end." Congressmen behind the bill say it is less a congratulatory slap on the back for the current program than it is a hard push toward the goal of generating between 2 and 4 percent of the nation's electrical energy needs by the year 2000 through wind (about 40,000 megawatts). Several say they thought DOE was just not moving swiftly enough, and others note industry complaints that only a few firms were benefiting from DOE largess.

Though the proposal was approved overwhelmingly by the House, it will probably be swamped in the technical disputes and political horse trading that surrounds the broader synfuels bill. Representative James Blanchard (D-Mo.), a sponsor of the bill who also serves on the conference committee, explains that "wind is simply not a high priority among the members, with all the other issues we have to argue about. I doubt if the House provisions can prevail as written, so we'll have to try to refashion the Senate proposal into what the House asked for."

Were the bill to be lost entirely in the synfuels dispute, the future of wind energy would probably not unduly suffer, and

Tumult at the Archives

A flap at the National Archives has been stilled, at least temporarily, by suspension of a highly controversial program to send tons of documents, now stored at overstuffed facilities in Washington, to regional centers.

Over the past couple of months, historians and scholars around the country have become increasingly dismayed at what have been perceived as high-handed attempts by the administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), which runs the Archives, to push ahead with dispersal plans without consulting archivists or scholars. Such was the alarm that historians in January formed an Emergency Committee to Save the National Archives; a delegation was sent to the White House to implore the President to intervene; and some 200 members of the professional staff of the Archives passed a resolution asking the President to stop the dispersal plans and set up a commission to study the matter.

At the height of the furor, though, the GSA administrator Admiral Rowland G. Freeman III directed that the records transfer program be halted pending further consultation with archivists and the "user community."

Freeman's plan was to move 100,000 cubic feet of documents, most of them generated at the regional centers of federal agencies, to archives at the regional GSA centers by next September. This was a drastic stepping-up of the Archives dispersal program which usually involves sending out no more than 10,000 cubic feet a year. Historians became particularly outraged when they heard that records of the Freedmen's Bureau, the Reconstruction-era agency set up to deal with ex-slaves, and old naval ship logs were to be sent out of Washington where it would be very difficult for scholars to get at them. There was much dramatic talk among scholars about "irreparable damage to the institution" and "destruction of the Archives as we know it."

Fears now appear to have been exaggerated, as well as exacerbated by a general lack of communication between the administrator and the users.

But whether friction can be avoided in the long term remains to be seen. For one thing the post of chief archivist has been vacant since last summer and scholars fear that Freeman, known for his brisk and authoritarian management style, will pick an archivist on the basis of management skills at the cost of scholarly credentials. The root concern, though, has to do with the location of the Archives in the federal government. The Archives, established in the 1930's, was put under GSA management in 1949. Historians and archivists believe it should be an independent cultural institution, along the lines of the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress. They have been chafing about this for at least a decade, particularly since 1974 when the then administrator of GSA, Arthur Sampson, gave permission to the about-to-resign President Nixon to take possession of his presidential papers—without consulting the National Archives. To reverse this decision it took an act of Congress that was subsequently ratified by the Supreme Court.

Dissatisfaction with the current arrangement has stayed relatively muted so long as GSA administrators have kept their fingers out of the operations. But Freeman, who was brought in last summer to tighten up management at the scandal-ridden GSA, has, according to critics, intruded to an unprecedented extent into decision-making that they think should be left up to professionals. Now that a vocal constituency has been activated, it is likely that any ill-considered move on Freeman's part will trigger a fresh storm of criticism. One benefit of all the fuss, says an Archives employee, is "it does indicate that a lot of people care" about the hitherto rather anonymous Archives. He adds in reference to Freeman: "it takes a genius to make a political issue out of the National Archives."—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

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