



Governor Richard W. Riley

W. Riley of South Carolina. "We will not be successful in finding solutions to the problem of nuclear wastes unless federal, state, local, and tribal officials are prepared to work together on the assumption that agreements can be reached, not with the presumption that impasses are inevitable," says Governor Riley.

With the full support of the council, Congress late last year passed the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act and since then northwestern states have formed an interstate compact for low-level radwaste management and states in other regions are working toward similar arrangements.—**Scherraine Mack**

New NIE Director an Unknown Quantity

President Reagan has selected as the new director of the National Institute of Education (NIE) Edward A. Curran, whose major professional experience has been in private education administration. Now part of the Department of Education, NIE was created during the Nixon Administration to provide a firm base for federal support of educational research.

In the education research community the initial reaction to Curran's appointment has been bewilderment. As one senior university researcher put it, Curran is "absolutely unknown in education research." A source in a national private school organization says that Curran is a "top-notch" administrator and is "well liked and well respected within private education."

Curran served on the Reagan transition team for the Department of Education and after February 1981 was associate director of the White House personnel office. During the 1980 campaign he was director of Professionals for Reagan-Bush.

Between 1968 and 1980 Curran was headmaster of the National Cathedral School in Washington, D.C., an old and socially prestigious private secondary school for girls. Before that he served in a series of teaching and administrative posts at St. John's School in Houston, Texas. A graduate of Yale, Curran holds a master's in teaching from Duke.

Naming an NIE director with a private school background is likely to cause some consternation within public school circles, since it comes at a time when Administration budget cuts and advocacy of tuition tax credits are seen as weakening public schools.

—**John Walsh**

Watt Withdraws California Oil Tracts

Secretary of the Interior James Watt abandoned his plan on 7 August to lease some ocean tracts for oil drilling off the coast of northern California, after becoming entangled in legal and political obstacles created by West Coast officials. He announced at a press conference in Washington, D.C., that he would postpone at least until 1983 the auctioning of areas in the four sedimentary basins that have been the most controversial: Eel River, Point Arena, Bodega, and Santa Cruz. Watt has already held a sale for a fifth basin that lies farther south, called Santa Maria, but he has been prevented from awarding 31 leases in the area by a local court. The judge ruled in favor of the state of California, which argued that the sale was procedurally flawed. Watt is waiting for the local court to file a written version of its decision before appealing to a higher court, where he expects that there will be less sympathy for the state's position. He said that he wanted to settle the legal question before forging ahead with the sales of northern California. Offering those basins now, Watt said, would simply

engage the government in wasteful litigation and probably bring in very low bids.

Environmental groups treated this issue as a major test of their strength on the West Coast and were quick to proclaim, in the words used by the Sierra Club, that this was a "total repudiation" of Watt's "antienvironmental policies."

President Reagan, meanwhile, has twice voiced support for Watt, once at a meeting in Washington and again at a press conference in California. On the earlier occasion, he said that Watt may be trying to get people to look at resource problems the way you get a mule's attention: "You hit it on the forehead with a two-by-four first." Later, at the press conference, Reagan



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Slowing the offshore offensive

said, "Jim Watt has been doing what I think is a common-sense job in the face of some environmental extremism that we've suffered from, and I can assure you Jim Watt does not want to destroy the beauty of America. He just wants to recognize that people are ecology, too. We have some needs, and there have to be provisions for us to live."

A spokesman for Watt, Andrew Newman, says the Secretary's ambitious 5-year plan for offshore leasing (*Science*, 31 July, p. 524) has not been much affected by the litigation in California. The final environmental impact statement is scheduled to be published in October, and Watt is expected to give full authorization to the schedule in January.—**Elliot Marshall**