

which specifically addresses the points that Gish raised in his presentation. "Make no mistake," says Mayer, "there will be a big response to the debate and we have to be ready to counter it. We have to ensure that teachers and college professors have the appropriate information in pithy form so they can answer reporters' questions when the time comes."

All agreed that point by point the creationists' arguments can be readily dealt with. The problem that individuals face in reacting to creationist arguments is being able to slip with facility from questions of biology, to geochemistry, to astronomy, to geology, and to all the other sciences over which such questions typically snake. The creationists have a booklet called "A handy dandy evolution refuter," so why should the evolutionists not be armed likewise?

Aside from the facts of the case, both the NAS and NABT meetings recognized the social and political arena in which the creation-evolution confrontation usually takes place. "In many ways we are facing a strictly political problem," comments Mayer. "While we were sitting around thinking about the issues, legislation was being railroaded through in Arkansas. In addition to getting information to people we have to be ready for action at the local level."

Sensing the need for grass roots action against legislative and other initiatives by the creationists, Stanley Weinberg, a retired biology teacher in Iowa, set up 1 year ago a network of committees of correspondence. "American politics are local politics," says Weinberg, "and committees of correspondence are a standard method of political action."

So far there are committees in 37 states, the smallest of which has a membership of nine, the largest 300. Weinberg acts as a coordinator, sending a newsletter and lists of relevant people and sources through the network. The aim is to enable local communities to react to initiatives by the creationists, by providing the names of people in the area who can respond authoritatively and by assembling resources. Participants at both Washington meetings were greatly impressed by the network and agreed that ways should be sought to develop it further. "We are very thinly spread," says Weinberg, "and our scope is limited at the moment. The expenses are met by dues from members, but very often the person who runs the committee, the liaison, has to meet costs from his own pocket."

A case that illustrates very clearly the

(Continued on page 638)

## Reagan Pledges Support for TMI Cleanup

The Reagan Administration has promised a substantial contribution to the cleanup of the damaged nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island. At a Republican fund-raiser near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on 9 October, budget director David Stockman said that "over \$100 million" would be funneled into the cleanup, chiefly for research on the fuel core. Stockman's promise was followed by a written pledge of help on 19 October, signed by presidential counsellor Edwin Meese.

Writing to Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh, Meese noted that the President had already agreed to have the Department of Energy (DOE) spend \$37 million in fiscal 1982 for work at Three Mile Island. "I wish to assure you," Meese continued, "that the President intends to request from Congress sufficient funds in future years to complete the identified DOE program. . . . This will include a total of approximately \$75 million (including FY 1982) to carry out the program approved by the President last spring, as well as a total of \$48 million (including previously appropriated funds) to complete the activities initiated under the agreement with EPRI [Electric Power Research Institute]."

However, Meese wrote, the government would have to limit its help to those areas which are of general benefit or are related to "its unique responsibilities under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to ensure safe disposal of nuclear waste." The commitment is not open-ended. Meese indicated that the DOE would "provide technical assistance to clean up the water in the building basement; remove and dispose of abnormal wastes not disposable at commercial sites; remove and evaluate the damaged reactor core; develop special tooling needed for early core access; and other appropriate activities consistent with these guidelines." In closing, he said that the financial burdens created by the accident would have to be borne by those "who produced and used the electric power from the facility, not the federal government."

Governor Thornburgh counts it a

victory to have extracted this pledge, limited though it is, from a White House which is cutting spending in nearly every other area. Thornburgh has been campaigning around the country since July to win backing for a cooperative financing plan to help the local utility pay for the \$1 to \$1.3 billion decontamination project. He managed to solicit one large pledge from the Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned utilities. Its board voted last month to raise \$192 million over the next 6 years. Reagan's contribution falls \$70 million short of what Thornburgh sought, but Thornburgh calls it a "breakthrough of enormous significance."—*Elliot Marshall*

## Gorsuch Defends EPA Meetings with Industry

The two top administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency recently defended the propriety of meetings held this summer between agency officials and chemical industry representatives. Despite sharp bipartisan criticism at two House subcommittee hearings, EPA administrator Anne M. Gorsuch and deputy administrator John Hernandez insisted that the meetings were not policy-setting sessions and were convened only to discuss scientific issues. Critics of the meetings, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, argue that these sessions, which were not publicly announced, appear to have persuaded EPA against regulation of formaldehyde and di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) (*Science*, 30 October, p. 525).

Toby Moffett (D-Conn.) told Gorsuch and Hernandez at a hearing on 21 October that the sessions may have violated a federal law that requires agencies to give public notice of meetings with private individuals. Moffett is chairman of the environment, energy, and natural resources subcommittee of the Government Operations Committee.

The EPA officials denied any wrongdoing. "We deliberately stayed away from policy questions at the meetings," Hernandez said. But Moffett and other subcommittee members hammered Gorsuch and Hernandez