with criticism for failing to announce the sessions, to invite consumer or environmental groups, and to have a transcript made of the meetings.

Gorsuch held her ground. "No one who requested to be at the meetings was denied," she said.

"But no one knew about them," retorted Barney Frank (D–Mass.).

The next day EPA officials were again grilled about the meetings by the Science and Technology Committee's subcommittee on natural resources, agriculture research, and environment. When asked about the format of the "science courts," as the meetings have been called by the Formaldehyde Institute in a letter to Hernandez, the agency administrators objected to the use of the term.

Gorsuch said icily, "I cannot be responsible for someone else's characterization of the meetings."

The only time that Gorsuch conceded anything to either subcommittee was 2½ hours into the Moffett hearing when she said, "In hindsight, the meetings could have been improved by giving public notice."

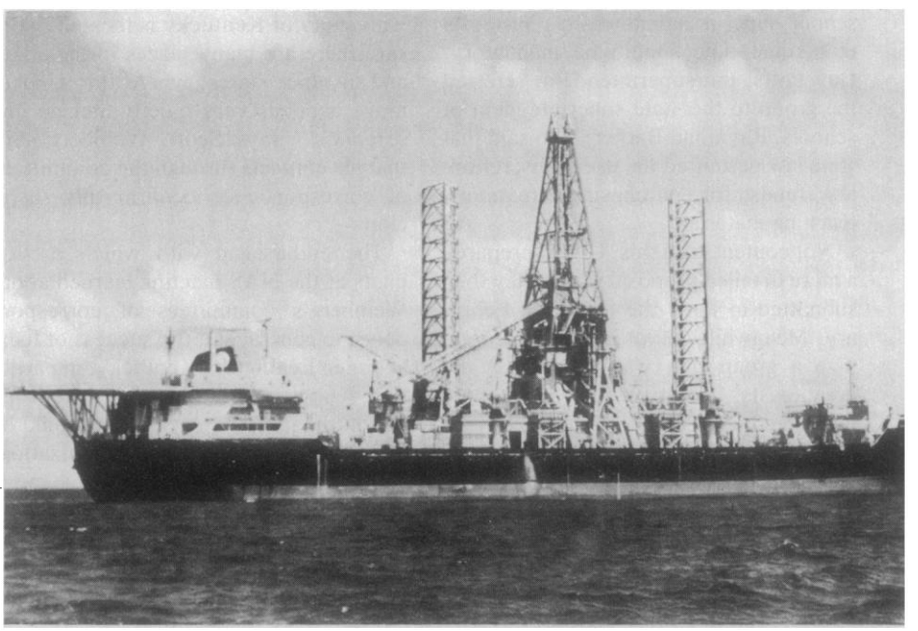
Hernandez defended the agency's plan to revamp the internal peer review process that will be modeled on a system now used by the U.S. Geological Survey (*Science*, 18 September, p. 1345). He conceded before the subcommittee that the system is slow but added that "it will increase credibility and give EPA scientists better confidence in their work."

—Marjorie Sun

Ocean Drilling Program Loses Oil Industry Funds

The future of the National Science Foundation's (NSF's) deep-ocean drilling program is again in doubt. On 5 August, NSF announced a plan to convert the ex-CIA salvage vessel *Glomar Explorer* into a drilling ship for research in currently inaccessible areas such as icy seas and some ocean margins (*Science*, 21 August, p. 851). But that plan, the product of years of debate and negotiations, has fallen apart because the oil industry has declined to provide crucial financial support.

At issue is what will happen to scientific ocean drilling when NSF's current research vessel, *Glomar Challenger*, reaches the end of its planned program in fiscal year 1983. NSF had proposed refurbishing the *Explorer* and putting it to work soon after the *Challenger* is retired. Between 1983 and 1987, the *Explorer* would have continued the program of drilling in the deep oceans. Then, in 1987, NSF planned to equip it with a riser and blowout preventers, which would permit drilling in the ocean margins where oil and gas deposits may be encountered. Thus, by the late 1980's, the *Explorer* would, according to the plan, be capable of drilling in a broad range of scientifically interesting areas.



Glomar Explorer

But all this would be expensive. Although there are no firm cost estimates for converting the *Explorer* and equipping it with a riser and blowout preventer, the operating costs alone are estimated at about $60 million a year. NSF thus sought financial support from the oil industry, which stands to benefit from the development of deep-ocean drilling technology. When the plan was announced, a consortium of ten oil companies tentatively agreed to provide $18 million a year to support the program, but at a meeting with NSF officials and outside scientific advisers on 6 October, the consortium announced that it is withdrawing as a full partner in the venture. The reason, according to NSF officials, is that the consortium felt that more companies should be involved to help spread the costs, but no others could be persuaded to join.

As a result, "the ocean margin drilling program is really dead now as originally perceived," says an official in NSF's Office of Scientific Ocean Drilling, and NSF is rethinking the whole program. Four options are under study. The most drastic is to cease scientific ocean drilling when the *Challenger*'s current program ends in 1983. The second option is to extend drilling with the *Challenger* until 1988. The third is to convert the *Explorer* but not add the riser and blowout technology. And the fourth is the full-fledged program announced by NSF in August. A final decision is expected to be made in January.

If a drilling program does go ahead without industrial participation, NSF will seek support from foreign countries. Five countries are now contributing $1.2 million a year to the *Challenger* program, but they may not have participated in a venture that would have directly benefited the U.S. oil industry.

An ironic footnote to the problems with the deep-ocean drilling program is that the Reagan Administration has been arguing that cuts in federal support for science and technology will be offset by increased R & D spending by private industry. In this case, at least, that assumption appears to be invalid.***—Colin Norman***