

people worst affected are the least equipped to sustain the injury, being primarily poor black children of the inner city.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, between 1976 and 1980 about 4 percent of all children aged 6 months to 5 years were found to have an elevated level of lead in the blood (at least 30 micrograms per deciliter, the level at which the CDC says therapy is indicated). Among rural white children, only 0.7 percent were found to have high lead levels. Among central city blacks, 18.6 percent had high levels of lead.

Needleman and Houk agree that the 30 microgram standard, until recently considered safe, may be too high. Houk says the first noticeable effects of lead on the metabolism occur at levels of 10 to 11 micrograms. Needleman says, "It's not clear what the highest safe level is. When I was a pediatric student, 60 micrograms was considered normal." If the EPA cancels the rule on leaded gasoline, Needleman says, the result will be predictable: "Blood lead levels will increase." Houk agrees.

In a memo dated 30 November 1981, Joel Schwartz of the EPA's energy economics branch summarized the virtues of decontrolling lead. His data were taken from a study done for the EPA by Sobotka and Company. Schwartz concluded that if the lead restriction were lifted, the large refiners would more than double the quantity of lead in gasoline, raising it from 1 to 2.5 grams per gallon. This would give the major refiners a windfall amounting to \$133 million in the next 2 years, Schwartz figured. The small refiners, according to less reliable data, would gain \$62 million in 1983. The grand total of this boost to the private sector in 1982 and 1983 would amount to about one-tenth of a cent per gallon for the big refiners and nine-tenths of a cent per gallon for the smaller ones.

Some may consider this worth the price in health risks. But officials in the public health community intend to make the contrary argument at the hearings in April. Houk says that no childhood disease even approaches lead poisoning in the breadth of its impact. Recent evidence suggests that the effects are magnified by poor nutrition. Houk worries that the decision to cut back food supplement programs may increase the lead poisoning problem even if no change is made in the gasoline rule.

"We have demonstrated that we can control lead in gasoline," Houk says, "and it just seems prudent to me that if you can do it, you should."

—ELIOT MARSHALL

Keeping the Door Open to Membership in IIASA

Federal budget austerity may not force an end to U.S. participation in the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) near Vienna after all. The council of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), which acts for the United States at IIASA, voted on 28 February to seek a workable compromise to allow continued U.S. membership.

When the \$2.3 million required for U.S. dues for IIASA was eliminated from the National Science Foundation last year, NAS told IIASA that the United States would have to withdraw from the organization (*Science*, 11 December 1981, p. 1222). The IIASA governing body, in effect, declined to accept the resignation immediately and indicated a willingness to make concessions to keep the Americans in.

What is involved is not only a new financial structure requiring reduced U.S. payments, but also guarantees that U.S. national security interests are not being compromised at IIASA. Some critics have expressed concern that East bloc scientists working at IIASA have misused free access to data networks in the West.

Academy Foreign Secretary Thomas F. Malone says that the NAS council in deciding to "pursue continued adherence" to IIASA was convinced that the quality of work done there was high and that the institution was filling a unique role. He said that the council was also satisfied with the prospects of new financial arrangements and with an understanding that the "appropriate controls" would be placed on sensitive operations. Malone added that those recruited to work at IIASA would be rigorously screened to be sure they met the criteria of high scientific talent.

IIASA is in the process of replanning its program to make it possible to reduce its \$10 million a year operating budget by about a quarter. Since IIASA was established 10 years ago the United States and the Soviet Union have each provided about 25 percent of the budget and the other 15 members split the rest of the bill. Under the smaller budget the U.S. annual dues and presumably the So-

viets' could be scaled down to about \$1 million. The next step for NAS is to go out and try to raise the money required.—**John Walsh**

Creationist Bill Fails in Maryland

The Constitutional and Administrative Law Committee of Maryland's House of Delegates held a 5½-hour hearing on a creationist bill 25 February. The impact of the recent decision (*Science*, 19 February, p. 934) on the unconstitutionality of Arkansas' creationist law was evident in the testimony. For this and other reasons, the vote, due imminently, is virtually certain to be negative.

The bill, which would require "reasonably unbiased presentation of creation-science and evolution-science" in public schools, is based in large measure on a draft currently being circulated throughout the country by creationist activist Paul Ellwanger (*Science*, 11 December 1981, p. 1224). Patrick Scannello, the bill's sponsor, notes that some minor changes have been made in the draft "to try to get round the judgment that struck down the Arkansas law."

Scannello, who freely admits his almost complete lack of familiarity with creationist literature, opened the hearing by reading a lengthy statement of detailed creationist arguments. He then hurriedly handed over to John Wisniewski, a salesman for a medical and scientific instrument company, who has been coordinating support for the bill. Eleven witnesses spoke in favor of the measure, stressing the fairness of presenting all scientific evidence relating to origins.

Twice as many witnesses testified against the bill. Scientists said that "so-called creation-science" is not science. Clergy pointed out that the view of origins encompassed in the bill represents just one narrow interpretation of the Bible. Parents expressed concern over the standard of their children's scientific education if the bill were to be passed. The Maryland State Board of Education, the Maryland Association of Science Teachers, and the Maryland State Teachers Association each expressed strong disapproval of the bill.

A representative of the American Civil Liberties Union said his organization would take the state to court if the bill passes into law.

As anticipated, Judge William Overton's opinion on the unconstitutionality of the Arkansas creationist law was cited frequently by the bill's opponents, although one proponent suggested the judgment was worthless because the case had been inadequately defended. Even if the committee ignores Overton's precedent-setting decision, members will want to consider the opinion of Maryland's own attorney general, Stephen Sachs. "House bill 1078 has as its purpose and effect the advancement of religion," stated Sachs on the day prior to the hearing.

If, as expected, Scannello's bill dies in committee, the legislature can look forward to another creationist initiative next session. This one, to be presented by the Family Protection Lobby, would give local school boards the option to adopt creationist curricula if they so chose.—**Roger Lewin**

Looking a Gift Computer in the Mouth at NSF

The National Science Foundation (NSF) will soon start soliciting donations of computer equipment for use in a foundation science education program. The National Science Board (NSB), the NSF's governing body, has also authorized exploration of broader use of donated equipment in NSF programs. The move could help overcome the shortcomings of equipment in many university laboratories, but has raised some tricky policy questions.

In January, the board considered an offer from two computer manufacturers to donate microcomputers for distribution under an NSF program that fosters use of computers in science education. NSB members were uneasy about some features of the proposal and asked the NSF staff to make revisions and resubmit it. The board approved the revised version at its February meeting and also told the NSF staff to study the possibility of wider use of donated equipment.

A major concern of the board was that NSF acceptance of donated

equipment might appear to be an endorsement of the manufacturer's products by the foundation. The board also wanted assurance that the staff had recommended the program on its merits and that the prospective gifts were not skewing priorities in NSF science and engineering education programs.

NSF Deputy Director Donald N. Langenberg says that the board was determined to "avoid the appearance of giving an NSF Good Housekeeping seal of approval" and prevent "inappropriate advertising," and recognized, "there was the question of fairness, of equity of involvement" for manufacturers.

The revised version of the proposal specifies that the program is open to all manufacturers. To avoid the impression of an NSF imprimatur, agreements drawn up between NSF and donors will provide that NSF's name not be used in advertising or public statements without NSF approval.

NSB board members are now apparently also satisfied that NSF staff had their priorities straight in recommending the new initiative for the program in question—Development in Science Education (DISE). The board was assured that a long-standing objective of DISE has been to promote the use of computers in education.

Under the revised plan, applicants for the grants will have the option of using their own equipment, soliciting donations of equipment themselves, or requesting items from a list of donated equipment that NSF will make available. Langenberg and other NSF officials emphasize that donated equipment will be gifts to grantees, not to NSF.

To build a list of available equipment, NSF will solicit discreetly through notices in the *Federal Register* and *Commerce Business Daily*. Donors will be asked to provide equipment worth a minimum of \$50,000 and be expected to give grantees information on hardware donated and access to company technical expertise and system software.

Industry interest in the idea of donating equipment should be whetted by recently enacted tax legislation that provides tax benefits to companies for such gifts. NSF officials say, however, that so far they have had only general indications of such interest.

The new initiative marks the first major instance of NSF serving as a direct agent for donated equipment, if at arm's length. NSB's receptiveness to the idea has no doubt been heightened by its growing concern over the inadequacy of computers and scientific instrumentation in university research. The original offer of equipment came at a time when instrumentation funding had received rough handling in the 1982 and 1983 budgets. The board sees the new initiative as one way to help and is willing at least to entertain the possibility of extending the formula to other foundation programs.—**John Walsh**

Hearings Planned for Classification Order

The Reagan Administration appears to have heeded critics who complained that the Executive was planning to increase its power to impose security classification on government information without adequate discussion. The comment period for the draft Executive Order on Security Classification, which was scheduled to end on 22 February, has been extended, according to Glenn English (D-Okla.), chairman of the House subcommittee on government information and individual rights. Since the new classification order would greatly increase the government's power to classify, English felt it was important that it be fully discussed.

English received a telephone call from national security adviser William Clark notifying him of the extension. English and seven other House committee and subcommittee chairmen wrote to Clark on 10 February complaining that the original deadline left too little time for hearings on the order (*Science*, 26 February, p. 1080).

In a statement on the House floor, English expressed his pleasure that the deadline was extended, commenting that, "There has been little public circulation of the draft order and, consequently, little public debate." The government information and individual rights subcommittee plans to hold hearings on the classification order on 10 and 11 March. No new deadline has been set for comments on the order.—**Gina Kolata**