science fiction" the public's amorphous fears about what will happen when we go about "playing God."

The only other witness at the hearing was French Anderson of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Anderson at the beginning of the hearing professed himself quite satisfied with the report, but was by the end of the morning admitting to some uneasiness over the world that gene splicing is opening up. It was the "reductionism" that bothered him—the knowledge that at the most elementary level the stuff of human life is interchangeable with that of all other life made him wonder "if there is anything unique about humanness . . . if not, there is nothing wrong with gene manipulation." The prospect he found "frightening."—***Constance Holden***

Humanities Association Goes Under

The American Association for the Advancement of the Humanities, which aspired to be a sort of AAAS for the humanities, has announced that it is going out of business.

Founded in 1977 and run almost single handedly by historian James Banner, the organization's purpose was to serve as a coherent voice for the humanities: to strengthen the disciplines and promote communication among them; to educate the public, and to explore new sources of support. The main vehicle for these concerns was a quarterly publication, the *Humanities Report*.

But the organization never really got off the ground. Membership peaked at 3000 and then declined to 2150. The state of the economy seems to have had a lot to do with the association's failure to flourish. However, said Banner, "it's very difficult for people in the humanities to understand that their professional world faces general challenges—collective problems that cannot be addressed by the fragmented approach characteristic of humanities for generations."

Banner explained that humanists, like scientists, have become hyperspecialized and fail to see value in an organization whose primary function is not scholarly. As for institutions, he said universities and other groups are so concerned with administrative and financial matters that the content of education is not receiving adequate attention. "We have reached a very dangerous pass in our culture where education is separated from learning," asserted Banner.

—***Constance Holden***

House Nixes Binary Program

The House on 22 July voted to delete the $54 million that the Administration wants for starting production of binary nerve gas shells. The vote —251 to 159—was particularly significant in view of the fact that it was the House that, on its own initiative, opened the matter in June 1980 when it voted to appropriate money for construction of a nerve gas production facility in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

The turnaround is in large part due to extensive educational efforts spearheaded by Representative Clement Zablocki (D–Wis.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and by Representative Ed Bethune (R–Ark.), which apparently more than offset strenuous lobbying from the Department of Defense and the White House. Zablocki, known as a firm supporter of defense, stated during the debate that the proposed program "does not contribute to United States national security but rather undermines it."

The bill now goes to conference with the Senate, which approved the nerve gas appropriation by a narrow margin in May.—***Constance Holden***

Air Force General to Head JPL

Former Air Force Chief of Staff General Lew Allen, Jr., will become a vice president of the California Institute of Technology and director of the institute's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), Caltech officials announced last week.

Jet Propulsion Laboratory is administered by Caltech for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Allen, 56, replaces Bruce Murray, who recently resigned the JPL directorship after 6 years in the position (*Science*, 16 April, p. 276).

Although some workers at JPL were initially taken aback by Allen's military background, he has gotten high marks there for his credentials as a scientist and administrator. After graduating from West Point in 1946 and obtaining his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Illinois in 1954, he spent 3 years at Los Alamos researching the physics of high-altitude nuclear explosions. That was followed by 4 years as science adviser to the Physics Division of the Air Force Special Weapons Laboratory.

His career since then has included

Lew Allen, Jr.

stints as head of the Air Force's Directorate of Special Projects in Los Angeles, with additional duty as deputy commander for satellite programs, Space and Missile Systems Organization; director of the National Security Agency; commander of the Air Force Systems Command; and, from 1979 until his retirement on 30 June, Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

"Allen's military background is clearly a sensitive issue," says Caltech President Marvin L. Goldberger—especially so since Caltech last year authorized JPL to take on unclassified military contracts to make up for the decline in NASA's planetary program. Ultimately, JPL will be doing about 30 percent of its work for the Pentagon.

But Goldberger insists that Allen's appointment was not made on that basis: "He even told the search committee, 'If you want me because you expect big, fat defense contracts, I'm not interested.' "

"I believe he is dedicated to the civilian space program," adds Goldberger, who has known Allen since they were both graduate students at Illinois. "His interests in JPL correspond exactly to my own."

—***M. Mitchell Waldrop***