year. The money will be spent on basic research in plant genetics. The bulk of each grant, according to Caldecott, is expected to support work by pre- and postdoctoral students.

In addition, the foundation will provide ten grants of $35,000 per year for 3 years to support individual scientists conducting basic research in plant biology related to agriculture. The aim is to provide some unrestricted supplemental funds for gifted scientists to extend their current research programs, and to attract scientists working in related areas to spend some time looking into agricultural problems.

The foundation expects to make its first awards next year. Applications for the interdisciplinary research grants close in mid-October and for the individual grants on 1 December.

—Colin Norman

Stephen Bechtel Appointed NAE Chairman

The Bechtel Group, Inc., a multinational engineering and construction firm, continues to expand its Washington power base. Last year, company officials Caspar Weinberger and W. Kenneth Davis were appointed to top posts at the Departments of Energy and Defense, respectively. This year, the company president, George Schultz, was appointed Secretary of State, and the company chairman, Stephen Bechtel, Jr., has now been selected as the first chairman of the National Academy of Engineering.

The academy advises the government on public policy through its membership in the National Research Council (NRC). In recent years, its members have avoided appointing a businessman to the top administrative post, for fear of creating potential conflicts of interest. Yet many apparently felt that some recognition of its predominately industrial membership was called for.

So, in June, they created Bechtel's unpaid new post. The charter permits him to chair meetings of the academy's governing council, which sets overall policy. But it leaves the administrative responsibility in the hands of the president, Courtland Perkins, who formerly taught at Princeton University. Perkins will continue to represent the academy at meetings of the NRC. Two years from now, when Bechtel's term expires, the new chairman will be selected by vote of the entire academy.—***R. Jeffrey Smith***

Cetus Cuts Projects, Lays Off 40 People

The Cetus Corporation, one of the largest and most ambitious of the new breed of biotechnology companies, has laid off 40 people and canceled almost half its research projects. The move is designed to focus the company's operations on projects likely to pay off in the relatively near term.

Unlike many of its smaller competitors, Cetus does not appear to be facing a financial crisis. It raised just over $100 million when it went public in March of last year, and reported a profit of $4.5 million in the fiscal year that ended on 30 June. Nevertheless, the company decided to pull in its horns to avoid financial difficulties in the coming year.

One potential problem is the recent decline in interest rates. Cetus earned $16.7 million in interest last year—more than half its income—by investing the proceeds of its stock offering, but with lower interest rates forecast, those earnings will be reduced. In addition, last May Standard Oil of California pulled out of an $8-million project it was sponsoring at Cetus to produce fructose.

"We took a look at where we should be spending our hard money and decided to concentrate more on unique, high-priced pharmaceuticals and agricultural products," says one senior executive. The company has thus dropped several projects aimed at using biotechnology in industrial processes and in energy production.

Instead, Cetus will focus on three chief areas: the development of diagnostic tests with monoclonal antibodies and DNA probes, the production of agents such as lymphokines that may have a role in cancer therapy, and agricultural biotechnology. The latter work will be carried out mostly at Cetus-Madison, a subsidiary established in Wisconsin in association with University of Wisconsin–Madison geneticist Winston Brill.

Peter Farley, the president of Cetus, has often said that what makes Cetus different from others in the biotechnology business is its focus on high-volume chemical markets. Now, however, Cetus, like others, is aiming more at the low-volume, high-priced pharmaceutical markets.

The 40 people laid off on 7 September included five Ph.D.'s. Fifty other people have also left the company this summer, 30 of them after a performance review in July. The company now employs about 455 people. Even with these staff reductions and slimmed-down research agenda, Cetus officials expect to do no more than break even this fiscal year.

—Colin Norman

Pesticide Data Released

"We've got heaps and heaps and heaps of microfiche data," says Lawrie Mott, a scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). She was referring to a mass of studies on the environmental and health effects of some widely used pesticides, which have just been released by the chemical industry.

Prior to June, none of the data had been seen by nongovernment experts (*Science*, 6 August, p. 515). Even then, when Mott and others from the environmental community initially got a look at it, they were prevented from taking detailed notes or discussing what they saw with outsiders. Now all but three companies with data of interest to the environmentalists have withdrawn these restrictions too.

The consequence is that a 1978 law ordering the data released to the public has finally taken effect. The industry was able to delay its implementation for 4 years and is still hoping for amendments to the law this year. But in practical terms, only DuPont, Stauffer, and Union Carbide do not want the data on widely used pesticides made public. Twenty other large pesticide producers have given in.

Mott says that some of the data will be sent to academic scientists for peer review, which could lead to requests for regulatory action. Eventually, she says, it may be used to allege inadequacies in the requirements for testing of pesticides for adverse effects.—***R. Jeffrey Smith***

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