Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

OSTP Fills Life Sciences Post

The White House personnel office has filled one of the two chairs the peripatetic James B. Wyngaarden once warmed. The former NIH director only briefly occupied the life sciences seat in the Office of Science and Technology Policy before becoming foreign secretary of the National Academy of Sciences. Last month, President Bush announced his intention to nominate Donald A. Henderson as associate director for life sciences at OSTP. Henderson holds both medical and public health degrees. Since 1977, he has been dean and professor of epidemiology and international health at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in Baltimore. Before that he worked on the smallpox eradication program of the World Health Organization.

As for the NIH post, that, of course, is still vacant. Indeed, if anything, the mystery surrounding the Administration's failure to fill the position has deepened. On 21 December Presidential science adviser D. Allan Bromley, who had just emerged from a Cabinet meeting, told *Science* editors that an announcement was imminent—perhaps even later that day. Would it be Bernadine Healy, chairman of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation research institute, who has long been rumored to be the top choice? Bromley wouldn't say, but he appeared confident that at last the position would be filled. Instead, as of 4 January, there was no word.

Peter Howard

Donald A. Henderson

U.S. Drilling Takes New Tack

U.S. scientific drilling researchers have recently been getting core samples from a 1-kilometer-deep hole in an unlikely place—the campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

It's part of a revival of the country's modest Continental Scientific Drilling Program (CSDP), which has been bogged down by funding woes (*Science*, 25 August 1989, p. 816). While German scientists broke ground for a 10-kilometer-deep, quarter-billion-dollar hole near the Czech border, U.S. researchers, who have lagged far behind in the scientific drilling stakes, are taking a different tack, going for "science, not spectacle," as one put it.

The first 6-centimeter-wide hole in the renewed CSDP was drilled last November at Rutgers. Paleontologist Paul Olsen and paleomagnetician Dennis Kent, both of Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory in Palisades, New York, say the site is an ideal spot to begin the series of six to eight shallow holes that will be drilled in the Newark–New Brunswick area. Together the holes will provide a continuous 25-million-year record of cyclical climate change, reversals of Earth's magnetic field, and the crustal rifting that formed the Atlantic about 200 million years ago.

Janet Kroboth-Weber

Shallow science. *Paleontologist Paul Olsen inspects core sample.*

Such scientific holes, including one 3.5 kilometers deep, have been drilled in this country, but the New Jersey project is the first under a new arrangement among the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Department of Energy. Under the agreement, the three agencies fund their own projects, but together they provide a steady $3 million per year.

That's not much by German standards, but it will provide the stability that has been lacking in U.S. drilling. "We didn't sense broad support for the ultradeep holes," says one program manager. No doubt the geologists' preference for small science won out over the natural appeal of spectacle. Physicists take note.

Poland Joins CERN

On 1 July, Poland will become the 16th full member and the first erstwhile Communist country to join CERN, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics. The unanimous decision was made last month at a meeting of CERN's Council in Geneva, which took Poland's impecunious economy into account in setting its fees at just 1 million Swiss francs ($765,000) a year until 1995. Poland's contribution will then rise gradually to become, by 2000, about 1% of the total CERN budget, which is currently about $665 million.

Although CERN is the first organization in Western Europe to be joined by Poland, the nation's scientists have been working there since 1959 and have a particularly strong presence on the current Delphi experiment. Other former Eastern Bloc nations may soon be added to CERN: discussions are currently taking place with Czechoslovakia, now known as the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, as well as Hungary and Yugoslavia.

Ice Damage at SLAC

California's orange growers weren't the only ones to be bitten by the big freeze last month. The late-December blast of arctic air that ravaged crops, shattered pipes, and subjected the normally balmy state to some of the coldest temperatures in its history also wreaked havoc on the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC), where physicists are sweeping up the remains of some 600 glass flow meters that once regulated the accelerator's vital cooling system. "It's quite a mess," says SLAC spokesman William Kirk, who adds that the physicists are still checking for damage to other components.

It was pure bad luck that the freeze came at a time when the accelerator was shut down for maintenance and equipment upgrades, says Kirk. If the accelerator had been running, the water in the regulators would have been warm and nothing would have happened. As it is, the cost of replacing the regulators could run into several hundred thousand dollars. And then there's the possibility of a delayed restart, which was to have occurred in March. Kirk laments: "It will certainly cost us a lot of time."