

agency programs, much like last year's global change initiative.

The computing initiative, which was sketched out in a 1989 report by Bromley's Office of Science and Technology Policy, will include support for advanced hardware and software development, the implementation of a national computer network known as the National Research and Education Network, and additional support for computer science education. Details about the education initiative are harder to come by, but Bromley has said it will involve all the nation's federal laboratories in attempts to improve the quality of math and science teaching. These laboratories will be "ordered" to make their personnel and facilities available to educators and students.

Two other major initiatives—one in materials science and another in biotechnology—are under development, and may appear in the 1993 budget, Bromley said.

Bromley also announced recently that two new panels will be added to the Federal Coordinating Committee on Science, Engineering, and Technology (FCCSET), an interagency group that coordinates federal science policy. Henry Habicht of the Environmental Protection Agency will chair a broad review of risk assessment methods used by federal science agencies, with the goal of forging a consensus on which methods are most effective. Another special task force, co-chaired by TRW executive John Foster and former Bell Laboratories executive Solomon Buchsbaum, will examine scientific and technology issues with national security implications.

Brown Picks Old Faces for a New Team

Whatever problems Representative George E. Brown (D-CA) may face as the new chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, an inexperienced staff

This may be the Golden Age of biology, but wildlife biologists feel like they're missing the party. Squeezed by molecular biology on one side and trendy environmental sciences on the other, researchers like Harvard entomologist E. O. Wilson argue that their fields are being shortchanged. And this is happening, they say, just when their work is increasingly necessary, as the human species whittles away at biological diversity around the globe.

At a 10 January meeting of the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology in Washington, Wilson concluded a talk on biodiversity with a plea for support. After describing the present era as the "sixth mass extinction event in history," he noted the "parlous condition" of research in his own field. Some of the most important work today is being supported by museums, he said, but taxonomy "tends to be pushed aside as old fashion-

Fund taxonomy! E. O. Wilson.

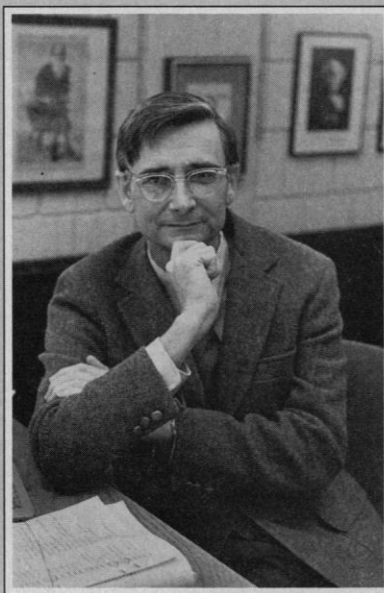
Funding Unsexy Science

ed, intellectually dull, and largely complete—none of which is true." Although their research may not be particularly glamorous, he added, taxonomists create the foundation upon which all other studies of biodiversity depend.

Wildlife biologists cannot function effectively without well-supported natural history museums, Wilson argued. Such facilities keep the best

records and research labs for biodiversity studies. The most striking example of neglect, he said, is the decision to cut back the staff of the British Museum of Natural History. But even his own Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard gets by on a "skeleton staff." And others, like the San Diego Museum of Natural History, are facing the possibility of extinction themselves (see p. 375).

Wildlife biologists have been making similar pleas for years, but the novel thing about Wilson's pitch is that he made it to the top science policy committee in the country.



won't be one of them. Brown recently finished assembling his top committee staff, a collection of old congressional hands determined to "make the trains run on time," as one put it.

For the committee's top staff slot, Brown tapped Radford Byerly, Jr., a University of Colorado physicist, director of the university's Center for Space and Geoscience Policy, and member of the space science and applications subcommittee from 1975 to 1987. Michael Rodemeyer, previously staff director of the House science subcommittee on natural resources and the environment, will take on the challenge of turning science policy into legislation as committee counsel. For a legislative director, Brown chose William Stiles, Jr., who directed the staff of the House agricultural research subcommittee, which Brown chaired for many years. And Peter Didisheim, Brown's current administrative assistant, will become the committee's

assistant staff director.

Legislative aides perform much of the "detail work" in Congress, such as drafting legislation, selecting hearing witnesses, and researching issues. "Legislative assistants are to congressmen what graduate students are to principal investigators," says one aide. "They're the people who put things together, gather information, co-author articles, and so forth."

New T_c Record Fails to Materialize

For more than 2 years, researchers in high-temperature superconductivity have labored—without success—to create a material that loses its resistance to electricity at a temperature higher than 125 K (*Science*, 19 October 1990, p. 374). Then came word last September from a Japanese team at Hitachi that said it had succeeded in developing a vanadium oxide (Ti-Sr-V-O) supercon-

ductor with a critical temperature (T_c) of 130 K. The reaction in the community: excitement—and some skepticism. But the skeptics, it seems, have won out.

According to the superconductivity newsletter *High T_c Update*, experiments attempting to replicate the vanadium findings have all fallen short. University of Houston researcher Paul Chu reported in September that his efforts to fabricate Ti-Sr-V-O produced materials with "no superconducting transition." The latest attempt by a team at Beijing University did note "some interesting anomalies" in vanadium oxide's electrical resistance. But these fail to provide "any convincing evidence for superconductivity," the newsletter reports.

Shin-Pei Matsuda, leader of the original Hitachi team, isn't discouraged. "I believe that [replication] will occur in the future. The material is metastable, so our results are difficult to reproduce."