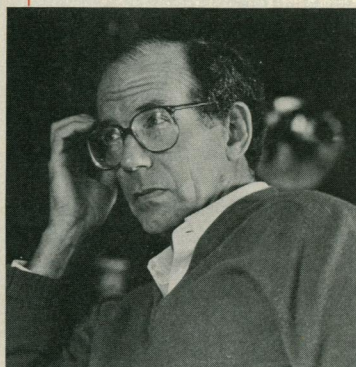


Prime-time Debacle?

■ Stanford University's campus is abuzz with talk that the university is about to suffer another public relations debacle over its overhead charges. The university has already been pilloried in the press for charging flower arrangements and a yacht as indirect costs of research. Now the scandal is about to get an airing on prime-time TV.

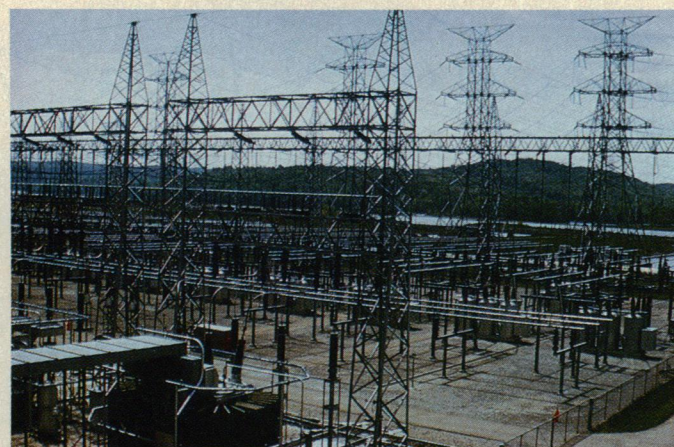
Late last month, university president Donald Kennedy attempted to explain Stanford's aggressive indirect cost recovery to the ABC news show "20/20"—and rumors are flying at Stanford that the as yet unaired interview was a disaster. Armed with information from Representative John Dingell's investi-



Stanford University

Donald Kennedy

gators, "20/20" reporter Stone Phillips reportedly sprung a number of questions for which Kennedy wasn't prepared, such as why Stanford billed the government for a reception following Kennedy's 1987 wedding. Sources at ABC say the show is tentatively scheduled to run on 8 March.



Power lines at a substation: transmitting cancer?

EPA: Physicists Unwelcome on EMF Panel

■ Last year, the Environmental Protection Agency upset the White House with a report identifying electromagnetic fields (EMFs) as a "probable, but not proven, cause of cancer in humans" (*Science*, 5 October 1990, p. 24). Now *Science* has learned that the agency has angered physicists by largely excluding them from a panel set up to review that report.

Donald Barnes, director of

EPA's Science Advisory Board, who oversaw the selection of the panel, says no physicist was selected because the committee's charge to examine epidemiological and laboratory animal data did not seem to call for one. A knowledgeable EPA staff member has a different explanation, however: Physicists were considered too skeptical of possible EMF-cancer links. Because they have been gener-

ally unable to reconcile correlations between EMF and cancer with traditional physical theories, the staffer says, physicists "have trouble accepting what's going on in the field."

Nevertheless, just days before the committee first met last month—and weeks after the 16 other members were chosen—Barnes anticipated complaints about the committee's composition and added Harvard physicist Richard Wilson to its membership.

Even the addition of Wilson hasn't mollified critics, however. "It's shocking that this committee has so few people with backgrounds in physics or biophysics," says Kenneth Foster, a University of Pennsylvania bioengineer and a self-described skeptic in the debate. The other committee members are mostly cancer researchers, biostatisticians, and epidemiologists—some of whom have published studies supportive of an EMF-cancer link.

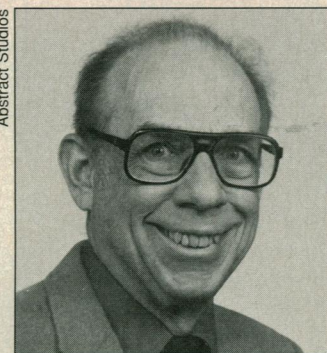
The panel's final draft is expected by summer or early fall.

NIH Challenged Over Secrecy of Misconduct Conclusions

■ Some of the fog that envelops federal inquiries into scientific misconduct may be blown away by a new lawsuit challenging NIH's Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI). Citing the confidentiality imposed by federal privacy laws, OSI and its bosses within the Department of Health and Human Services have since 1988 refused to provide any details about completed cases in which OSI found no evidence of misconduct. Now, however, these

officials will have to defend their reasoning before a federal judge.

Last month, NIH physicist Charles McCutchen filed suit against a handful of HHS officials under the Freedom of Information Act, arguing that the records of completed investigations are not personnel, medical, or other confidential files protected by privacy laws. Furthermore, it is impossible for the public to know whether OSI is making accurate judgments



Abstract Studios

Charles W. McCutchen

when such information is kept private, McCutchen says.

The Justice Department, which handles all such litigation for the government, has yet to file a reply. But attorney Harold Walderman, who has served in the department since the Freedom of Information Act was passed in 1967, warns: "The government generally has good reasons for withholding records."

NASA to Explore Three Possible Mars Missions

■ A "synthesis group" convened by NASA to come up with at least two different ways to design a manned mission to Mars is expected to offer three alternative approaches when it turns in its report next month: "science-based," "resource-based," and "use-based."

A science mission would em-

phasize data collection in space physics and the life and planetary sciences and could include such stepping stones as a lunar observatory. A resource mission would aim at exploiting energy and mineral resources on the moon or Mars, depending on their accessibility. The "use-based" mission is less well de-

fined but is apparently designed to enhance commercial opportunities in the solar system.

In addition the panel, which is chaired by retired Lt. Gen. Thomas Stafford, will recommend more research in space life science and the development of nuclear space propulsion and a new family of launch vehicles.