

Global Clearinghouse

■ With an anonymous gift of \$5 million from a Louisiana oil man, Hubert H. ("Skip") Humphrey III, the Minnesota attorney general and son of the late vice president, is spearheading a campaign to set up a Global Institute of the Environment. Its purpose: to serve as a worldwide

Mike Krivit



Hubert Humphrey III

clearinghouse on environmental research and law, a registry of new environmental technologies, and a major funder of "urgent and practical" research programs.

The private, nonprofit institute would be based in St. Paul and would be affiliated with the University of Minnesota. Last year, the school launched a new graduate program in conservation biology—reportedly the nation's first to combine biology and public policy.

The organizers have set a meeting on 17 April to nail down corporate contributions, and Humphrey hopes to raise several million dollars from dozens of leading Minnesota businesses—including 3M, Waldorf Paper, and Control Data Corp. Although Humphrey is saying little at this point, he reportedly has won the backing of Mustafa Tolba, executive director of the United Nations Environment Program—which is particularly interested in the clearinghouse—and is said to be renting space in St. Paul's World Trade Center. The plans call for an initial budget of \$1.5 million a year and a scientific board of advisers, which will give out money for four or five "urgent" environmental research projects in the first year of operation.

White House Science Secrecy Virus

■ Although the White House science office has been getting good health reports recently, there are signs that it could be coming down with a new executive branch secrecy virus—and that the malaise could affect its relations with Congress. At least one part of Science Adviser D. Allan Bromley's office—the revitalized Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (FCCSET)—has prompted some grumbling on Capitol Hill.

FCCSET committees are made up entirely of federal agency employees, so there's no requirement that their work be open to public scrutiny, and White House officials can invoke "executive privilege" to block congressional prying. When Senator Albert Gore (D-TN) became interested in the activities of the biotechnology

research subcommittee and asked for its charter and the names of its members, FCCSET support staff at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

said no. Gore, who chairs the science subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee, retaliated by putting a hold on the Senate confirmation of Donald A. Henderson as OSTP associate director. The spat was short-lived. OSTP backed down, giving Gore the information he wanted, and he allowed the Henderson nomination to go through. But now even Gore seems to have been bitten by the bug: He is refusing to make public the names that OSTP once kept from him.

State secrets such as these



Al Gore



Donald Henderson

can't be kept for long, however. *Science* has learned that the committee is chaired by David J. Galas, associate director of the office of energy research at the Department of Energy, and the vice chairman is W. Franklin Harris from the National Science Foundation. The committee is determining the extent of the federal government's role in biotechnology as the first step in producing a major, interagency initiative in biotechnology for the 1993 budget. The initiative may be approved by the next full FCCSET meeting on 15 April.

Dingell Presses Universities on Dues Costs

■ Now that he's finished raking Stanford over the coals for its overly generous (to Stanford) methods of accounting, Michigan Democrat John Dingell, chairman of the House oversight and investigation subcommittee, is warming up for another round in the indirect cost battle. The potential target: universities that bill the government for part of the cost of belonging to higher education organiza-

tions like the Association of American Universities (AAU).

On 21 March, Dingell wrote to the presidents of the 56 research universities that are members of the AAU, stating that during his committee's investigations, "we became aware that dues for membership in professional organizations such as the American Association of Universities [sic] have been routinely charged in overhead

accounts, part of which have been allocated to the government." Dingell's letter goes on to ask how much the government is paying for the privilege of being lobbied. The universities have until 12 April to give their answers, and when some of the schools reveal that they have charged part of their \$33,000 annual AAU membership to the government, you can expect the fur to fly.

■ The Public Health Service (PHS) will soon announce how it plans to apportion the new, higher-paid jobs in the Senior Biomedical Research Service (SBRS) among various health agencies. Authorized by Congress last year, SBRS offers attractive salary and benefit packages to recruit and retain scientific superstars. According to J. Edward Rall, deputy director for intramural research at

Preliminary PHS Job Allocations

