

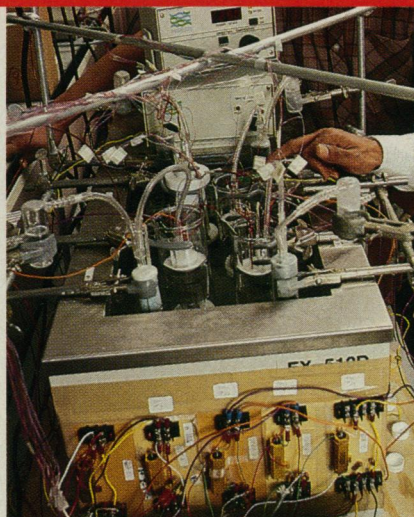
Cold Fusion Institute Left Out in the Cold

■ A long chapter in the contentious history of cold fusion is about to come to an end. The National Cold Fusion Institute (NCFI) in Salt Lake City will close its doors on 30 June, having absorbed the \$5 million it received from the state of Utah, awarded just months after Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischman announced they had achieved a controlled fusion reaction in a palladium-deuterium electrolysis cell.

The \$5 million was never more than seed money with which the NCFI was expected to leverage donations from federal agencies and private sources. Because of cold fusion's hostile reception within the scientific community, however, little more than \$100,000 in grants ever materialized. The NCFI was further damaged by scandal when news accounts revealed

last summer that former University of Utah president Chase Petersen had transferred \$500,000 in university funds to the institute, disguised as an anonymous donation. Petersen resigned, and the NCFI's fund-raising languished. When the money ran out, so did the institute's chance to become a recognized center for research into the controversial phenomenon.

While there are rumors that some NCFI staff members may continue to research cold fusion at the University of Utah, nearly half have already left for other jobs, according to NCFI observers. Institute director Fritz Will was unavailable for comment; his



Electrochemistry—but is it fusion?

administrative assistant told *Science* that Will was busy writing the NCFI's "final report" and preparing for the Second Annual Conference on Cold Fusion, to be held later this month in Como, Italy.

New Rx for Improving Manufacturing Skills

■ An upcoming report on manufacturing research priorities for the 1990s may not be exactly what industry wants to hear. Although a National Research Council (NRC) panel will endorse more federally funded research on high-tech equipment such as advanced sensors, "smart" manufacturing systems, and new materials, it will also sound an all-too-familiar refrain: To stay competitive, U.S. manufacturers must dramatically improve both worker skills and management practices. And that means spending more on education and training.

For instance, one of the report's five top research priorities is simply called "Manufacturing Skills Improvement." Among its recommendations is that the National Science Foundation fund joint industry-university consortia to increase the knowledge of manufacturing among faculty and engineering students.

Within four other research priorities (intelligent manufac-

turing, equipment reliability, product realization, and advanced engineering materials), the NRC also will argue that understanding and eliminating "people problems" is at least as important as developing new technologies. For instance, to speed up the flow of new products from design to production,

the report will encourage experimentation with new management styles, better communication between different sections, and localized decision-making. These changes, it argues, will create an environment in which computer technology can flourish. The report is scheduled for release on 16 July.

■ Want to see government AIDS researchers turn red and start sputtering? Just ask them about the congressionally mandated, last-minute plan to save big bucks by cutting the number of federal scientists permitted to go to Florence, Italy, for this year's annual AIDS confab, scheduled to run from 16-21 June. These scientists, and even some bureaucrats, argue the move not only didn't save any money—it actually cost dearly in terms of rearranged schedules, broken commitments, and pointless ill will over who would be allowed to go to the meeting.

The ruckus first erupted when Representative William Dannemeyer (R-CA) demanded to know why the government was spending \$1.5 million to send some 400 federal employees to Italy in such tight fiscal times. As of 10 June, the number of travelers had dropped to 298 and was falling fast, but the savings was only \$150,000. Add in the cost of countless meetings to decide who would go and who wouldn't, and it starts to look as if the federal government may have managed to increase the cost while decreasing the U.S. presence at the meeting. Some savings.

Cost Con-CERNs

■ A feud has broken out between the European high-energy physics laboratory CERN and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) over the contentious issue of overhead research costs.

Concerned because European physicists in the United States pay overhead charges as high as 70% at national accelerator laboratories while U.S. physicists pay none at CERN, the CERN Council has opened negotiations with non-CERN member nations intended to achieve what CERN director-general Carlo Rubbia calls "full reciprocity." If the negotiations fail, Rubbia says, CERN will unilaterally assess nonmember physicists a 15% overhead charge beginning 1 July, and a 30% charge as of 1 January 1992. Currently, no physicists at CERN pay overhead charges.

DOE officials are unfazed by this threat. "We're taking a very strong stance that we don't agree [with the overhead charges], and that we won't live with them," says John O'Fallon, director of DOE's high energy physics division. O'Fallon argues that the U.S. labs have always assessed overhead charges, and that they do so against all researchers, not just foreigners. "Just because there's been a sign change in the flow of physicists across the Atlantic, for CERN to suddenly say they need an overhead tax makes us a little suspicious," O'Fallon says.

The amount of money at stake is not large—between \$2 million and \$4 million, depending on whether you believe CERN or DOE estimates. Both organizations, however, are standing firm on principle. O'Fallon was at CERN earlier this week to begin what are likely to be protracted negotiations.



Carlo Rubbia