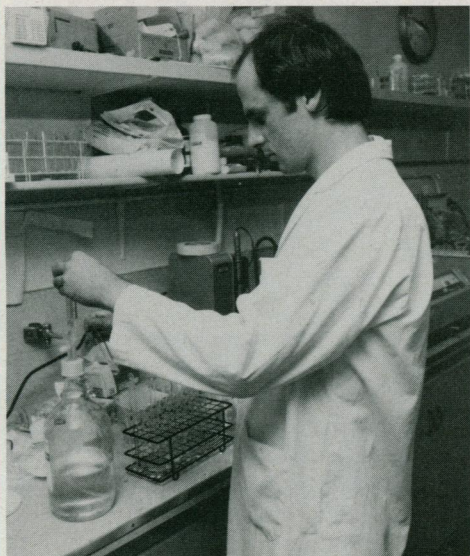


Dismantling Canada's Reductionist "Old Boy" Network



O. Hamright/Agriculture Canada

British Columbia researchers like this one have been dominated for too long.

■ Canadian agricultural research may be due for a shakeup. A draft report from that nation's Science Council

decries the existing mechanism for setting research priorities—the Canadian Agricultural Services Coordinating Committee—as too rigid and “dominated by senior researchers, extension workers, and research managers experienced only in a reductionist, disciplinary-oriented approach.”

The council argues that the traditional approach to agricultural research, where find-

ings are generated within narrow disciplines and subsequently integrated into larger systems, is poorly suited to meet

the requirements of sustainable agriculture. Instead, they suggest, Canada should redirect the \$500 million (U.S.) it spends annually on agri-food R&D to support multidisciplinary research.

In addition, the council emphasizes academic collaborations with agricultural extension personnel to speed the movement of scientific advances to the field, and recommends breaking down barriers within agricultural colleges so researchers can communicate more freely with their colleagues in other specialties.

The report's authors, themselves representatives of the old school, cheerfully acknowledge their part in creating the current mess. “What we are saying is as much a criticism of ourselves as anybody else,” says one.

Tape Trouble

■ No wonder NIH director Bernadine Healy is so unhappy about breaches of confidentiality in misconduct investigations carried out by the Office of Scientific Integrity. In her testimony before a congressional subcommittee last week (see p. 618), Healy revealed that, back in the spring, OSI inadvertently mailed a tape recording of an expert panel's final deliberations in the OSI investigation of intramural AIDS researcher Robert Gallo and his former colleague, Mikulas Popovic, to Popovic's lawyer. Although the lawyer eventually returned the tape, which contained the scientific panelists' own conclusions on the investigation, she apparently kept a copy for use in defending her client. Healy, a scathing critic of the way OSI protects confidential materials, declined to blame anyone in particular. “I suspect everything [OSI] did contributed to such breaches of confidentiality,” she told *Science*.



NIH Bill to Mandate ROTC Program for Biomedicine...

■ Taking a cue from ROTC programs that have produced a steady stream of college-educated military officers, a new program in the NIH reauthorization bill could swell the ranks of minority scientists by virtually guaranteeing a college education to promising undergraduate students in exchange for a commitment to work at NIH after graduation.

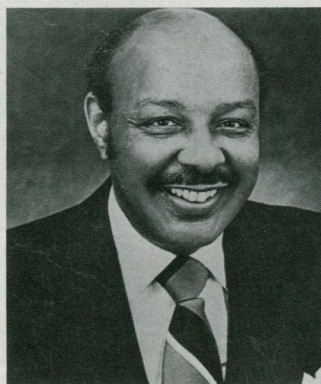
Sponsored by Representative Louis Stokes (D-OH), who has helped create similar programs for the CIA and the National Security Agency, the measure would authorize NIH to spend \$1.5 million to create the new program for undergraduates who are members of underrepresented minority groups. Each year of \$10,000 scholarship support would obligate participants to work for NIH during a summer break and for a year after graduation.

“We need to be able to recruit outstanding black youngsters,” Stokes told *Science*. “Once they start working for a

place like the NIH, there's a likelihood the good students will stay.” NIH officials agree that measure is at least a small step toward increasing the number of minority scientists. NIH doesn't keep figures on minority representation among its intramural scientists, but only 11% of all “senior positions” within NIH are held by members of minority groups.

Other health agencies may also soon have similar programs: In September the House Energy and Commerce Com-

Louis Stokes



mittee will consider a Stokes bill that calls for a similar ROTC-style program for the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control.

...And Data Sharing

■ For years, the notion that biomedical researchers should freely share data they've produced in federally funded research has been enforced by little more than an honor system. But a provision in the NIH reauthorization bill recently passed by the House will, if it becomes law, require NIH grantees to furnish their data to other researchers on demand.

According to the legislation, research data must be kept and made available for 3 years after a research project is completed and for 5 years after results are reported in a scientific journal. This rule would immediately apply to data from “clinical, behavioral, or epidemiological

research whose purpose is to evaluate the safety or effectiveness of a drug, medical device, treatment, or other product or substance.” One objective, according to a congressional aide, is to make it easier for scientists with dissenting views to obtain publicly financed data and publish alternative analyses.

While broad, the sharing rule would exempt personal records and patent applications, as well as research materials such as cell lines. Its chances in Congress look good: A House staffer notes that the provision has been “noncontroversial.” But the administration has threatened to veto the entire bill over a separate provision that would overturn the fetal tissue research ban.