

That presented no problem in the world of pork. The aspirations of the project were simply redefined: "Rather than investing precious health care dollars into a demonstration project for exotic technology," reads the draft of an article about the hospital intended for hospital journals in compliance with the charge to share news of the project with other institutions, "St. Chris decided to concentrate its efforts in creating a truly optimal design."

Says Thomas Bathgate, who headed the project and wrote the draft, "I always envisioned it from the beginning as an energy conservation program rather than as a new technology project. And as a conservation program using practical methods available here and now, we exceeded our expectations—we even saved enough money to add an extra 30,000 square feet to the building." Then Bathgate adds: "What the legislators chose to call it doesn't really matter."

### Pork perspectives

"Do pork projects live up to the promises made for them?" asks an official at one national laboratory who keeps copies of the Energy and Water Development Bills of past years in stacks on his desk. "Is Havemeyer [the Columbia chemistry building] a National Center or a university chemistry building? Is Rural Enterprises more a critical conduit for technology developed at national laboratories or a state promotional agency? Could peer review have spotted in advance the problems that the children's hospital encountered with the new technologies? I think the answers to these questions are obvious."

So does Congressman Harris W. Fawell of Illinois, author of a pork-buster bill introduced last June. Fawell calls pork projects in the science budget "egregious examples of greed designed to help a particular district or congressman rather than the country's science program," which is "inexcusable given the current deficit."

Other scientists, however, admit that these three—and some other pork projects—have both scientific and social value. Yet they think the projects should not be funded through the DOE budget. Says Al Trivelpiece, director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, "Part of what was behind the initiatives was that academic institutions in this country were frustrated in their attempts to revitalize their infrastructures and after the Columbia project they began to look to the energy and water bill as a way of doing it. But I think that funding a building at a third-party institution for a project that is not a direct part of the DOE program is a misuse of the department's prerogative."

■ ROBERT P. CREASE

## Neuroscience at Risk at NSF

Just 2 years into Congress's "Decade of the Brain," neuroscientists—who might be expected to be riding high on the rapid pace of progress in their field—find themselves preoccupied with an unforeseen problem: a threat to neuroscience's very existence within the structure of its old ally, the National Science Foundation (NSF). Last month the NSF decided to split the units that fund biological and behavioral sciences, a move that upset neuroscientists who believe behavioral sciences to be a key part of their field (see *Science*, 18 October 1991, p. 368). And as if that wasn't worrisome enough, now comes news that the NSF is considering various reorganization plans for its biology unit, some of which recommend the dissolution of neuroscience as an entity.

"It would be the death of neuroscience for all intents and purposes at the NSF if they did the extreme thing of just atomizing it, and putting [our] proposals into programs having to do with molecular or cellular biology," says University of Arizona neurobiologist John Hildebrand, who chairs an advisory committee to the NSF for biology, behavioral, and social sciences. "It is antithetical to where neuroscience is going, which is toward understanding the neural basis of complicated behavioral phenomena, cognition, perception, and so forth."

Neuroscientists like Hildebrand are wondering why the NSF, having played a key role in the development of their field, would now decide to change its supportive stance. "A lot of the things that were revolutions in neuroscience were heavily supported at the outset by the NSF," points out physiological psychologist William Greenough of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Critical advances such as the recognition of plasticity in the mature brain and the role of peptides as neurotransmitters were shunned at their early stages by the National Institutes of Health but eagerly funded by the NSF, says Greenough, thanks to a "good set of program directors... who had the knowledge of neuroscience, and the insight" to make enlightened decisions. "It would be unthinkable," adds Hildebrand, for the NSF to dismantle such a successful program.

But it doesn't seem to have been so unthinkable to those on a special NSF task force that last month proposed reorganization plans for biology, behavioral, and social sciences. "It is easy to read the task force report as basically recommending that... neuroscience as a unified entity would either cease to exist or be greatly reduced," says Greenough.

In response to the report, Greenough, a councillor for the Society for Neuroscience, along with fellow councillor Thomas Carew of Yale, and society president Robert Wurtz of the National Eye Institute, went to plead their case to Mary Clutter, NSF's assistant director for biology, behavioral, and social sciences, and the one who will make the final decision on the restructuring. The three weren't alone. Clutter says she has heard from "beaucoup neuroscientists... more neuroscientists than anything else."

While Clutter says she welcomes their comments, she makes it clear that she has not necessarily been swayed by them. "The NSF has in a sense protected [neuroscience] for the last 15 to 20 years," she told *Science*. "They have been given their own division.... We haven't done that for any other area."

It may, in Clutter's words, be time to "mainstream" neurobiology: putting cellular neurobiology in with other cell biology programs, developmental neurobiology with developmental biology, and so on. But the problem with that plan, counters Stanford developmental neurobiologist Carla Shatz, is that "the brain has unique problems that are not shared by other systems."

Indeed, neuroscientists insist the issue is not one of funding levels—which Clutter says will not suffer—nor of protection of their field from mainstream competition, but rather of the intellectual recognition of neuroscience as a multidisciplinary field with the unifying goal of understanding the brain. "We are not asking for more money," says Yale's Carew, "We are just saying don't rip us up—don't dissociate the discipline. Neuroscience... has to keep its integrity or it loses the thing that defines it."

Whether neuroscience as an entity will survive the reorganization at NSF may still be up in the air: Clutter is playing her cards close to her vest. "I'm considering everything," she says. "I haven't made up my mind in advance." On 31 October, after this issue of *Science* went to press, Clutter was to meet with the advisory committee headed by Hildebrand, to hear recommendations from working groups within the NSF. She will make her decision, she says, by the end of November. Until then, neuroscientists are waiting anxiously, hoping their message has been heard.

■ MARCIA BARINAGA