

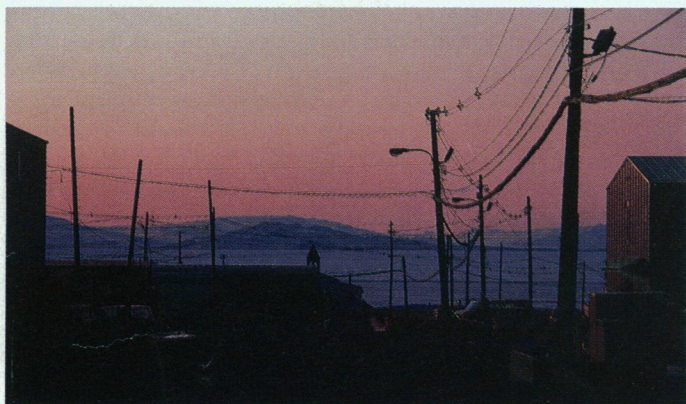
Antarctic Program Financially Secure—For Now

■ The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Antarctic Research Program—left in limbo for months while negotiators worked out a funding split between NSF and the Defense Department—may finally be on firm footing for 1992. A plan recently approved by the White House will fully fund the NSF, thereby forestalling a threatened evacuation of Antarctic researchers (*Science*, 15 November, p. 927).

The new agreement ends a series of bizarre accounting maneuvers that rival those of Sheik Abedi's BCCI. Last summer, Congress cut the NSF budget by \$105 million, but later restored the money by directing the Pentagon to pay for environmental cleanup and logistical operations at the Ant-

legislators sent \$5 million from NSF back to the Pentagon and asked the Administration to transfer another \$70 million to the defense budget from either NSF or the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

To bring all this buck-passing to an end, NSF submitted an operating plan in December that tacitly assumed somebody else would come up with the missing \$70 million. The White House has okayed this plan, and NSF officials think it will soon clear the appropriations committees in Congress. But nobody yet knows from where the \$70 million will come. "I don't think anybody's in a rush to offer it up," says one HUD budget official, who adds that the accounts probably won't be



McMurdo Station scientists can relax now that funding is in place.

arctic station. But just last November, pinched by limits set in last year's budget agreement,

settled until the last possible moment—on 30 September 1992.

Federal Society Members to Get Some Breathing Room

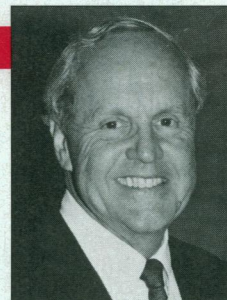
■ Federal scientists who work for professional associations on government time will be able to enjoy the status quo a while longer. Earlier this year, the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) issued a proposal as part of a comprehensive reform of federal ethics guidelines that would have barred such work (*Science*, 20 September, p. 1348). Now the ethics office has informed other agencies that it intends to shelve a final

decision on the rules concerning associations until after it has finished revising the remainder of its guidelines.

The OGE's retrenchment follows a barrage of criticism from representatives and members of scientific, legal, medical, and other professional associations who complained that the new rules would make it harder for societies to function and could turn federal employees among their ranks into "sec-

ond-class citizens." According to a 9 December memo by OGE director Stephen Potts, the office received 980 responses on the proposed rules, of which an "overwhelming majority" were critical of the change.

The OGE hasn't given up on issuing new rules, however. Once it has put the other ethics



Stephen Potts

guidelines to bed by next March or so, it will study those 980 comments in order to produce a new proposal on participation in associations. After another 60-day comment period, OGE will is-

sue a final rule. Potts says the task could take most of 1992 and might even "spill over" into early 1993.

New AIDS Drug Poised to Move Into Development

■ A promising new AIDS drug—virtually untouched since the pharmaceutical giant Hoffmann-La Roche mothballed it last summer—is about to get back on the development track. As *Science* went to press, insiders were saying that Hoffmann-La Roche's final decision on a licensing partner for Ro 24-7429, an antiviral compound that attacks the AIDS virus in a novel way, was imminent.

Citing financial reasons related to its corporate strategy, Hoffmann-La Roche decided last May not to develop Ro 24-7429, focusing instead on two other promising antiviral drugs further along in the development pipeline. But recent reports that the AIDS virus can rapidly develop resistance to the current crop of antiviral compounds have heightened the need to find agents that employ a different mechanism. (A prototype of Ro 24-7429 is described on p. 1799 of this issue.)

A single clinical trial to determine the toxicity of Ro 24-7429—begun before Hoffmann-La Roche started backpedaling on the drug—continues at Johns Hopkins University, and so far it appears the drug is safe. Once the new licensee is on board, federal AIDS officials will be anxious to see if the drug is effective as well.

DOE Physics Programs Receive a Holiday Gift

■ Major high-energy and nuclear physics research programs at Department of Energy (DOE) laboratories, which earlier this year were facing a potential 10% budget cut in 1993, have been given a reprieve by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Instead of layoffs and delays in experiments—and possibly even the closure of a major laboratory—research directors can now anticipate a slight increase in funding for the physics base program.

The turnabout occurred just after Thanksgiving, when OMB rejected DOE's budget request of \$897 million for all physics programs but the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). In-

stead, OMB provided \$995.7 million in funding—an increase of \$7 million over the 1992 level. In addition to funding the base program, the OMB plan provides \$44 million for the long-awaited main injector at Fermilab's Tevatron accelerator.

OMB originally found the money for the base program by taking it from the SSC's previously sacrosanct budget, cutting the \$650-million SSC request down to \$535 million. But the proposed cut didn't please President Bush, sources say. He has restored funding to the SSC while allowing the physics base program funding to grow as well, raising the question of just where the extra money will come from.