edited by DAVID P. HAMILTON

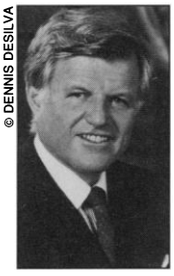
Reorganization Plan for ADAMHA on Track

A plan to shelter the biomedical elements of drug and mental health research by moving them under the NIH umbrella—written off as dead just a few months ago—has been resurrected. If all goes according to plan, the reorganization will now take place by October.

Last summer, the Bush Administration said it would protect the research programs of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA) by putting them together with those of NIH, rather than forcing them to compete for scarce funding with politically popular mental health and substance-abuse programs. But the plan ran into legislative trouble: Representative John Dingell (D–MI) refused to let the bill out of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which he chairs, although he never offered substantive objections to the plan.

Dingell

As it turns out, Dingell may have been more interested in holding the plan as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Senate than in killing it. What he wanted was Senate approval of a bill that mandates severe punishment for generic drug company executives who provide false information to the Food and Drug Administration. Senator Edward Kennedy (D–MA), who shepherded the ADAMHA reorganization plan through the Senate, agreed, and a deal was struck. The only obstacle to the plan now is the need to negotiate legislative language that will be acceptable to both the House and the Senate.



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Kennedy

Moving Vaccines via Public Relations

Unable to convince U.S. drug companies that a pot of gold lies at the end of the development of a new vaccine, officials at the Agency for International Development (AID) are trying a new tack—to persuade industry that vaccines make for good PR.

After spending months discussing new approaches to vaccine development with industry and government health officials, AID officials suggest in an internal AID document obtained by *Science* that industry participation "might be promoted by activities that are softer, image-enhancing, or that advance corporate relations." According to the document, one such approach might be an annual "Children's Vaccine Initiative Prize" to honor "innovative or significant" corporate efforts in vaccine research.

Coaxing more vaccines out of industry is part of a proposed 6-year AID project that would support the children's vaccine initiative, a program launched earlier this year by a coalition of government health officials, international donor agencies, and individual scientists (*Science*, 13 March, p. 1351). The lion's share of AID funding for the project, says an agency official, will support field testing of new vaccines in developing countries. "Certainly the weight of the strategy doesn't rest on PR," she says.

NANCY LONG

Publicity shot. AID hopes to encourage companies to develop new vaccines for the Third World.

More Clout for British Science

Unexpectedly, British scientists are looking forward to a more coherent science policy in the wake of the 9 April general election, thanks to government changes that will create a new Office of Science and Technology and add a scientific representative to the British cabinet. The new science office may eventually even be upgraded to a full science ministry such as those in France and Germany, according to research directors who favor such a move.

The new science office will control the $1.8 billion annual budget for the five UK research councils—a responsibility previously buried within the massive Education Department—and should be more receptive to advice on strategy and competitiveness from the government's science advisory council. Research will also have a dedicated representative on the cabinet in the person of former health secretary William Waldegrave.

While the ruling Conservatives had not mentioned the reorganization in their election manifesto, the opposition Labour party had promised similar changes. British political parties are notoriously unwilling to borrow their opponents' good ideas, so the science office's creation is seen as a personal coup for its new head—Bill Stewart, the government's chief scientific adviser. British researchers now hope that Stewart will use his new position to win increases in strapped research council budgets.

Support for the Big Bang?

New radiation data just in from a major NASA satellite should create quite a stir in the astrophysical community over the next few weeks. Supporters of the Big Bang say the data appear to confirm their views and strengthen standard cosmological theory.

Last year, preliminary data from the Cosmic Background Explorer, or COBE, showed the universe's microwave background—the pervasive radiation apparently left over from the Big Bang—to be perfectly smooth. Those results made life difficult for cosmologists who wanted to explain how clusters and superclusters of galaxies were formed, since a smooth early universe is essentially incompatible with the observed large-scale structure of the present universe.

Fortunately for these researchers, the new COBE data show lumps of 13 millionths of a degree in the cosmic background. According to COBE project scientist George Smoot, these lumps show up in a fractal-like pattern that fits with the predictions of "inflation" theory, a useful but untested explanation for the expansion of the early universe.

But the new results could fire up some controversy, Smoot admits. Because the unevenness in the background radiation is a minuscule signal—much smaller than the noise Smoot's team has attempted to filter out—the results could be open to challenge. Add the fact that other measurements taken from the South Pole are at odds with the COBE data, and you have the elements of a major astrophysical dispute.