SCIENCESCOPE

edited by DAVID P. HAMILTON

Reopening the "Crack Baby" Question

A new study of rhesus monkeys seems likely to kick off a round of controversy over the effects of cocaine on fetal development. Shortly after *Science* went to press, a research team at Emory University was scheduled to present evidence that questions the notion that cocaine use during pregnancy will produce abnormally small and psychologically impaired infants, popularly know as "crack babies."

Working at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory, the research team continuously infused pregnant monkeys in the last 20 weeks of their 23-week gestation period with 0.3 milligrams of cocaine per kilogram of body weight per hour, a dose team leader Jane Ellis says is "equivalent to what heavy cocaine users would use." Surprisingly, however, the 32 baby monkeys born in the past 2 years have behaved and grown normally, Ellis says. Although the Emory team plans further behavioral testing, Ellis says that "it seems unlikely that anything's going to show up 5 or 10 years down the road."

But the Emory team's preliminary results will also raise a red flag. The pregnant monkeys showed none of the physiological and behavioral effects normally associated with cocaine consumption, such as elevated blood pressure or irritability. So far, Ellis has no explanation for this unusual result, and she concedes that it threatens to undermine the rhesus monkey as a model for cocaine's effects. But she continues to defend her work: Even though critics point out that other cocaine studies on rats and sheep have shown noticeable developmental effects in infants, Ellis counters that the rhesus monkey's reproductive system more closely resembles that of humans than do the other models.

GENERAL ELECTRIC AEROSPACE

Lost in space no longer. New legislation promises to give the Landsat satellites (Landsat 6 is shown here) steady budgets and a new home.

Landsat to Get a New Home

The troubled Landsat program, the U.S. government's civilian satellite observation system, may finally get a new lease on life this year, if pending legislation in Congress clears both houses by September as expected.

Unwanted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which dragged its feet for several years on building a badly needed new satellite, Landsat has long sought a budgetary home. Last year, some legislators suggested giving the program to the military, which has shown increasing interest in remote sensing. But that plan won few takers, since security requirements might have restricted civilian access to Landsat data.

Now, however, legislation crafted by Representative George Brown (D–CA) and Senator Larry Pressler (R–SD) may give Landsat a secure foundation. Under a bill now before the Senate, Landsat will be run jointly by NASA and the Department of Defense (DOD)—a move that will funnel defense money into the program's satellite procurement while keeping data management and satellite operations in civilian hands. In addition, the bill mandates a technology demonstration program and a set of milestones aimed at helping the program managers decide when and how to build new satellites.

The new arrangement appears to suit the Bush Administration just fine: It has already requested money in the DOD and NASA budgets for Landsat 7, the next satellite in the series, although the agencies cannot spend the money until the new bill is passed.

Another OMB Science Staffer Bids Adieu

It's beginning to look like a stampede: Another White House science overseer is departing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In mid-September, Norine Noonan, now chief of OMB's science and space programs branch, will leave to become vice president for research at the Florida Institute of Technology. Noonan is the third experienced OMB science staffer to leave the agency in as many months (*Science*, 3 July, p. 19).

Observers on Capitol Hill—who don't normally have the warmest relations with OMB—regard Noonan as an exceptionally able manager of her budget portfolio, which includes much of the government's civilian basic research program and disparate items such as the space station. "Norine was outstanding," says one Senate aide, who also frets that "there's no backup in the system" now that she and her boss, former associate director for energy and science Joseph Hezir, have both decided to leave.

And why is Noonan going? Some speculate that she has been driven out by the grim prospect for federal research programs in the next few years. Not so, says Noonan. She says she's pleased to be returning to academia. (She came to Washington 9 years ago as a "naive" biochemistry professor from the University of Florida.) And she adds it's just a coincidence that three top OMB science officials have decided to quit this year.

NSF's New Public Affairs Offensive

Facing tough times and the likelihood that a much-heralded plan to double its budget in 5 years is about to bite the dust, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has plenty to worry about. But the agency has a plan to improve its odds in the funding wars: a new public relations initiative intended to keep the public better informed about its good works.

According to a recent ad in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, NSF is looking to double its public affairs staff with four new hires—one to be designated chief of the agency's internal publications, and three others to help crank out press releases and answer calls from the media. "We've felt for a long time that the public affairs office was understaffed," says NSF press office director Michael Fluharty, who adds that NSF wants more extensive coverage of the research supported by its scientific divisions. But the agency aims to expand without permanently increasing the size of its staff: It wants to fill the new posts with temporary 2-year "loaners" from academic and nonprofit institutions.

Meanwhile, as NSF turns up the volume in the press office, it is quietly silencing *Mosaic*, a glossy magazine that has long served as a low-key source of information about federally funded basic research (*Science*, 31 January, p. 523). Staffers say the NSF quarterly will go out of business with a final double issue in October.