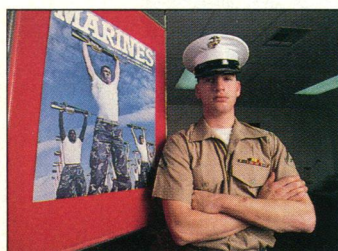


edited by CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON



DAEMMICH/PHOTO

Bar none. Congress is threatening universities that restrict recruiting.

Congress: Ban Recruiters, Lose Grants

More than 100 U.S. universities that restrict military recruiting on campus may be in jeopardy of losing defense research funding, thanks to a bill pending in Congress. But university administrators don't expect the Pentagon to pull the plug anytime soon.

The presence of the military is a touchy subject for many universities. During the '60s and '70s, ideological opposition to the Vietnam War led to bans on recruiters. These passions cooled in the '80s, allowing recruiters to return, but then state and local governments began passing anti-discrimination laws that were applied to the military because of its prohibition of homosexuals.

Angered by New York's eviction of recruiters from its state university system in response to a discrimination ruling from the state's high court, Representative Gerald Solomon (R-NY) introduced legislation earlier this year that would bar universities that restrict recruiting from receiving Defense Department research grants. In May, his amendment passed the House of Representatives as part of the 1995 defense authorization bill, and earlier this month similar legislation passed the Senate. Both are expected to become law later this summer.

Universities that currently restrict military recruiting could lose millions of dollars of defense research funding, unless they obtain exemptions to state anti-discrimination laws. But as of early this week, many of these universities contacted by *Science* were not yet plotting a survival strategy. Why not? Seems the record on implementing such recruiting laws isn't impressive. Sheldon Steinbach, general council for

the American Council on Education, points out that similar legislation was passed in 1972. But the Defense Department didn't issue implementing regulations until 1980, and even then, rarely enforced them. This time around, the legislation is tougher and enforcement may be obligatory. But although Steinbach says "we're distressed by the thrust" of the legislation, he's hopeful that a compromise can be worked out with the Pentagon. His advice to universities: "Sit tight—and see what the regulations look like." With no statutory deadline in either pending bill, it could be a long wait indeed.

Shotgun Marriage for EPA and NSF Review?

Dissatisfied with technical reviews at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), members of Congress are planning to force the agency to hitch up with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and follow NSF's lead in this area.

Over the years, EPA has taken a scattershot approach to reviewing its extramural grants and technical documents that underlie its regulations. Models of the health risks of radioactive elements in drinking water, for example, get little outside review until they're already part of pro-

posed regulations, but a 3-year review of dioxin's health risks has received outside scrutiny from the beginning. For Congress, EPA's promised reforms have taken too long, and some legislators say they'll wait no longer.

Last week, the Senate committee that controls EPA's budget passed an appropriations bill that asks the agency to "enter into a partnership" with NSF to review basic research proposals. The bill calls on NSF to "apply its peer-review process" to half of EPA's \$100-million extramural basic research program.

The directive took NSF by surprise, says James Edwards, deputy director of NSF's environmental biology division, who is involved in preliminary discussions with EPA. Edwards says at this point he doesn't know whether NSF would include EPA grants in its peer-review system or simply provide guidance on how to create an NSF-like system. Nor does the bill language give NSF extra money to review EPA grants. "This would not be an inconsequential amount of work," says NSF legislative affairs deputy director Joel Widder. Before the bill becomes law it must survive a House-Senate conference expected to occur before Congress' August recess.

Investigation Confirms Murderer's Claims

Nearly 2 years after Valery Fabrikant, a mechanical engineering researcher at Montreal's Concordia University, gunned down four faculty members, the case continues to reverberate in Canada.

Fabrikant shot his colleagues in August 1992 after he had accused the university of failing to conduct a full investigation of his charges of research fraud and conflict of interest in his department. Since then, a series of reports (*Science*, 17 June, p. 1662) and investigations has brought Canada's main science council to the view that, although nothing could justify Fabrikant's crime, some of the allegations he raised were correct.

Last week, Concordia released a financial audit that confirmed many of Fabrikant's charges of corruption. The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) responded by freezing a general research account at Concordia, as well as the accounts of three professors linked to the affair.

Among its findings, the audit—originally requested by NSERC—determined that brothers Seshadri and Thiagas Sankar, both professors of mechanical engineering, and former engineering dean M.N.S. Swamy had submitted duplicate expense claims, camouflaged personal expenses to look like university business expenses, and claimed expenses at identical times but different locations. All three have agreed to leave Concordia, although they deny that they did anything improper.

The amount in the university's general research account is less than \$180,000, says NSERC controller Patricia Sauvé-McCuan, but NSERC has not ruled out freezing all \$4.7 million given directly to university researchers if it doesn't see reforms. Meanwhile, NSERC is investigating whether it can bring criminal charges against the three Concordia researchers.

Truce on Planned Fusion Facility?

A cease-fire may be imminent in the battle over a controversial \$1-billion laser fusion project at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. In May, anti-nuclear and arms-control activists convinced the Department of Energy (DOE) to delay a decision on the National Ignition Facility (NIF) project, which supporters say will advance prospects for commercial fusion power but opponents believe imperils nonproliferation efforts by allowing bomb-makers to design new weapons. But an unprecedented series of meetings between lab officials and activists—orchestrated last month by Representative Ronald Dellums (D-CA), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee—may have produced a compromise.

In a 29 June letter to DOE Secretary Hazel O'Leary, Dellums lays out the plan: If O'Leary decides to start the process of requesting funding for the project and beginning technical design work, she should also agree to review the nonproliferation question. This would allow DOE and Congress to hold public hearings on whether to go ahead with the project without delaying funding for work on its basic design.

DOE officials say that O'Leary is weighing the Dellums proposal. In the meantime, the facility's supporters are heartened by a draft report from an independent JASON technical review panel that reportedly supports the NIF proposal on technical grounds.