Funds for NSF science education still in doubt

The process of determining the fiscal year 1982 budget for the National Science Foundation was fraught with difficulties and confusion this year. The issue is still not settled. Conferees were scheduled to meet after the August recess to reconcile differences between bills passed in the House and Senate.

In May both houses of Congress passed President Reagan's budget package, which included proposed spending levels for NSF. The $1033.5-million Reagan budget for NSF, while leaving physics research in a relatively strong position, proposed eliminating all science and engineering education funds except those for ongoing fellowships ($9.9 million) and sharply cut funds for the social sciences (PHYSICS TODAY, April 1981, page 57). The new reconciliation process requires that standing committees then meet to consider the budget package and make recommendations to achieve the proposed savings in Federal programs. The committees, each of which has jurisdiction over a particular subject matter or program, decide which programs are to be cut and by how much. The result of this deliberative process led the fourteen Republican-controlled Senate committees to recommend incorporating cuts totaling $39.6 billion and their Democratic-controlled counterparts in the House to recommend cuts of $37.7 billion. These proposals are then voted on.

It was at this stage that the House of Representatives was presented, at the last minute, 26 June, with an Administration-sponsored alternative to the committees' recommendations—the Gramm–Latta II substitute, named after its two co-sponsors, Phil Gramm (D-Tex.) and Delbert Latta (R-Oh.). The rules given for the omnibus budget authorization package limited floor debate on the bill to consideration of a single amendment, Gramm-Latta II. Among the changes that the amendment included were deletions of budget authority for NSF as well as for the research conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Federal Aviation Administration. This meant that without further legislation no funds were available for these agencies. After a debate the same day in which many objections were raised about confusion and the unavailability of copies of the proposal, the Gramm–Latta II substitute was passed by a close 217 to 211 vote.

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NSF was left in a precarious position. Proposed authorizing legislation had not been passed in either house of Congress. Although this is not unusual, it was unclear whether there would be time to consider separate appropriations before the August recess. The fiscal year ends on 30 September. At the very least a continuing resolution would have to be passed to enable NSF to continue paying its staff while the budget was being decided. There was also speculation that NSF had been dropped from the omnibus authority either to eliminate all NSF funding or to present opportunities for further cuts.

The major reason funding proposals were dropped from the Gramm-Latta II substitute was because the authors decided neither to incorporate nor rewrite the committee's recommendations, according to Patricia Nicely, Congressional liaison at NSF. Thus separate consideration on the floor of the House allowed them to voice any objections and to have them voted on. The Committee on Science and Technology, headed by Don Fuqua (D. -Fla.), recommended that $127 million be added to the NSF budget, $65.1 million to be earmarked for Science and Engineering Education.

NSF will receive funding as separate appropriation bills have now been passed in each house of Congress. The House of Representatives bill calls for $1103.5 million, an additional $70 million over Reagan's request. No ceilings or floors for individual programs are set in the bill. Of the $70 million, $25.1 million is to be added to Science and Engineering Education, with no specification as to how the money should be allocated. For the $44.9 million added to the research budget, the language of the House bill suggests that the Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences and other areas that were the most strongly reduced in the pro-

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posed FY 1982 budget, be the most strongly reduced by this appropriation as well. The Senate bill calls for $1047.5 million to be appropriated for NSF, a $14-million increase over the Reagan budget. Of this increase, $10 million is earmarked for Science and Engineering Education—$5.5 million to provide new grants for graduate students and $4.5 million to be used for the highest priority programs as determined by the NSF. According to Albert Young, the Acting Deputy Assistant Director for Science and Engineering Education at NSF, the additional $5.5 million for graduate students would support about 450 students.

After recess there will be a House–Senate conference to resolve differences between the two bills. At the moment it would be difficult, if not impossible to predict what will happen to the NSF budget. —JC

No Israeli visas for India meeting

A conference on the Applications of the Mössbauer Effect, to be held in Srinigar, India, 13–17 July, was postponed after the Indian Government failed to issue visas to two Israelis and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry then withdrew its sponsorship. The conference was to be the first meeting with full participation of Mössbauer specialists from both East and West.

India, which has a sizable Moslem population, has no diplomatic relations with Israel. The Israelis, like other applicants, were advised to obtain visas by the conference organizers; they applied to British consulates in Israel. Six weeks before the conference was to begin, Shimon Ofer, of the Racah Institute of Physics, Hebrew University, was informed by the British that the Indian Government had denied his visa application. E. Rivka Bauminger, also of the Racah Institute, received no word at all. These two and another Israeli at the Racah Institute, Solly Cohen, who had no trouble because he has a British passport, notified the conference organizer, V. G. Bhide (on 1 June), and its international advisory committee of the visa rejection and indicated they would have to withdraw the papers they had been invited to present if no visas were received by 30 June.

Members of the advisory committee informed Bhide that the rejection of the visa application violated IUPAC rules and would entail the withdrawal of sponsorship. Bhide, who had invited the Israelis and—according to R. H. Herber (Rutgers) and J. C. Walker (Johns Hopkins)—must not have anticipated that his government would deny visas to participants in the conference, took the issue to the government for "consideration at the highest levels" and meanwhile wrote back to a member of the advisory committee that it was the policy of the Government of India to issue landing permits, not visas, to Israeli citizens. Ofer told us that landing permits had not been mentioned when the visas were denied or when the travel procedures were first described. Even so, reliance on landing permits rather than visas would not have satisfied IUPAC's policy that "the Union will observe the basic policy of political nondiscrimination" because the Israelis would not be treated just as everyone else was. This view is disputed by the scientific attaché of the Indian consulate in Washington, who told us the difference between landing permits and visas is immaterial.

Although the Indian Government was to reconsider the issuance of visas, no word came. One of the members of the advisory committee with whom we spoke proposed that the 3 June bombing by Israel of Iraq's nuclear reactor might have had something to do with that silence. A deadline that IUPAC had set passed, and the Union withdrew its sponsorship. In addition, about 20 scientists who had planned to attend protested.

Bhide informed prospective participants that the conference was postponed due to a fire that had taken place at the campus of Kashmir University. All our sources found this explanation implausible because the university was only to be used for some of the housing. There was speculation that Bhide had tried to avoid embarrassing his Government with that account. In fact, a later letter from Bhide confirmed that IUPAC's withdrawal had "precipitated the decision" to postpone the meeting. Another letter explained that the visas were denied because the Indians couldn't assure the Israelis of adequate protection.

In yet another letter—the correspondence has been voluminous—A. P. Mitra, Foreign Secretary of the Indian National Science Academy, reported that "no instructions were issued by the Government of India to any authority not to issue visas to the Israeli scientists who wished to participate in the conference." He also repeated what Bhide had written, that "participation by Israeli scientists in conferences held in India and sponsored by ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions, to which IUPAC belongs) has not been on the basis of visas but on the basis of landing permits." In fact, Bhide explained in a later letter to a member of the conference advisory committee that normally the Indian Government issues landing permits and not visas to citizens of countries with which it has no diplomatic relations.

It is not known whether Mitra's letter indicated a change in policy, resulted from a lack of communication among various branches of Indian Government, or was an attempt to find some way to admit the Israelis without issuing visas.

Another difficulty that would have independently prevented some of the US participants from attending was encountered at NSF. Although NSF initially agreed to act quickly on a request for travel money, it issued a grant letter to US scientists only 2½ weeks before the conference was to begin. It would provide enough money for two or three out of the eleven who had applied to go. The reasons the NSF gave—that the field is not active and that the Indians are not in the forefront of research on the topic—are disputed by the conference participants. One of the participants explained that whether the Indians are or are not leaders in Mössbauer research is irrelevant because one attends an international conference to meet with people from all over the world, not just the hosts.

Bhide has rescheduled the meeting for Jaipur, India, 14–19 December, days that should be convenient for most of those who had planned to attend in July, including North Americans. Whether the Indian Government will change its position and issue visas to Israelis cannot be predicted. The Government is now seeking to negotiate with IUPAC; IUPAC has indicated it will not sponsor any conferences in India until India treats all participants equally. —DG

Trivelpiece to head DOE Office of Energy Research

Alvin W. Trivelpiece, a physicist and vice president of a San Diego research firm, Science Applications, Inc, is the new director of the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Research. As director Trivelpiece will have a twofold responsibility–he will administer the various nonmilitary long-term research programs that are managed by DOE and he will serve as technical adviser to the Secretary of Energy on DOE energy research and development programs.

Trivelpiece received his BS in 1953 from the California State Polytechnic College and his PhD in 1955 from California Institute of Technology. He