

# Dellums and Schiff Leave Congress; Changes at NASA

When **Ron Dellums** announced on 3 February that he was resigning after representing Berkeley, California, in Congress for 27 years, panegyrics and tributes poured over him on the House floor for nearly two and a half hours. Dellums, who once described himself as a "commie pinko, Afro-topped, bell-bottomed dude from Berkeley," spent almost all of his career in Congress on the Armed Services Committee (now called the National Security Committee), including a short but effective two years as its chairman.

As the committee's senior Democrat and a Californian, he might have been expected to favor big defense budgets and support new military technologies. Instead, Dellums, a psychiatric social worker by training and a dedicated peacenik by commitment, fought against the Vietnam War during the Nixon Administration, the neutron bomb in the Carter Administration, the B-1 bomber in the Carter and Reagan Administrations, the MX and Trident II-D-5 missiles throughout the Reagan years and the B-2 bomber through the Reagan, Bush and Clinton terms. He fiercely opposed the Strategic Defense Initiative and just as fiercely advocated a nuclear arms freeze and a comprehensive nuclear test ban. Representative Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat who occupied an office next to Dellums in the Rayburn Building, referred to him on the House floor as "the conscience of Congress on peace and arms control issues for this country and for the globe."

So it was not surprising that one of Dellums's last acts before departing Congress on 6 February was to pay tribute to **Harold P. Smith**, who left the Pentagon at the end of January. Smith had been Assistant to the Secretary for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs. When he took the job in 1993, Smith promised William Perry, a Stanford professor who became Clinton's Defense Secretary, that he would stay only four years. "I stayed five years and saw the programs not only succeed but pass into other hands and sometimes other agencies," he said in an interview. "And I can now leave with confidence."

Smith, who earned all of his degrees at MIT in nuclear engineering, including a PhD in 1960, and then taught nuclear engineering and physics at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1960 to 1976, carried away three Distinguished Public Service Awards, the highest honorary citation that can be

given non-career Federal employees.

But it was Dellums who presented Smith, a California constituent, with perhaps the greatest accolade. He cited Smith's leadership in the cooperative threat reduction program, which was designed to carry out agreements with countries of the former Soviet Union to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. This, said Dellums "eventually resulted in the denuclearization of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine" and "initiated the construction of a major fissile material storage facility in Russia to provide secure, long-term storage for about 12 500 nuclear warheads. . . . [Smith] personally negotiated an agreement with Russia to design the first chemical weapons destruction facility to begin the destruction of 40 000 metric tons of chemical weapons."

According to Dellums, Smith "significantly advanced" the destruction of US stockpiles of chemical weapons at Johnston Island in the Pacific and Toole Army Depot in Utah, and he stepped up liquidation of chemical weapons at seven storage sites in the US to meet the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty, which Congress ratified last year. Dellums noted that Smith took the lead after the Persian Gulf War in improving the detection of chemical and biological agents and in establishing vaccine programs for US troops. Smith had recognized the Defense Department's critical shortage of sensors and other equipment that would be needed for combat forces to survive under conditions of chemical and biological contamination. Dellums also congratulated Smith for working with the Department of Energy in organizing the stockpile stewardship and management program in anticipation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which will eliminate all testing of nuclear explosives and monitor for any surreptitious weapons tests.

At a farewell ceremony in the Pentagon on 29 January, Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre credited Smith for "making us much more aware of the reality of less destructive, but more likely, threats confronting our combat forces and civilian population" from chemical and biological agents and for raising the government's sights on the department's counterproliferation activities. Hamre praised Smith for shepherding the counterproliferation, stockpile stewardship and cooperative threat reduction programs through

some tough times on Capitol Hill and elsewhere. "It is significant," said Hamre, that when President Clinton and Russian President Yeltsin signed the Helsinki Accord in March 1997, the cooperative threat reduction program was "specifically mentioned" as an example in lessening the specter of proliferation after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

President Clinton has chosen **John M. Deutch**, Institute Professor in the department of chemistry at MIT, to be a member of the President's Committee of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST). Deutch replaces Phillip A. Sharp, a Nobel Prize winning molecular biologist at MIT's Center for Cancer Research, who resigned from PCAST last year after Clinton appointed him to the National Cancer Advisory Board. Replacing Sharp with Deutch still leaves MIT with three members of the 17-member PCAST. The other MIT people are Charles Vest, the university's president, and Mario Molina, another Institute Professor and a Nobel laureate.

Deutch was rumored last spring to be the odds-on favorite to succeed John H. Gibbons, who, Washington science pundits insisted, was about to resign as Clinton's science adviser and director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The gossip was nothing more than mischievous speculation. Deutch said he had not been approached for the job and did not seek it himself (see PHYSICS TODAY, June 1997, page 67). Gibbons continues to occupy his White House post, though reports persist in some science publications that he is stepping down.

Deutch is a familiar figure in the nation's capital. When the Carter Administration established the Department of Energy in 1979, Deutch served as the first director of energy research and later became undersecretary of energy for two years, and then returned to MIT to become provost. At the start of the Clinton Administration in 1993, Deutch was summoned to Washington to be Undersecretary of Defense, and 11 months later, he was elevated to Deputy Secretary of Defense. After another 11 months, Clinton named him director of the Central Intelligence Agency, where he served from May 1995 to December 1996.

At his first PCAST meeting on 15 January, Deutch startled other committee members, including Vest, his boss at MIT, who were discussing a

plethora of university problems, such as government-set rates for overhead reimbursement and standards for cost accounting. "Now that I'm back at the university," said Deutch, "I see more clearly the consequences of government actions on teaching and research. I would urge you [as PCAST members] to be as vicious as you can be [in giving advice on government encroachment in higher education] and to terrorize the government whenever you can."

**O**n 17 January, two days after the PCAST meeting, **Angela Phillips Diaz**, the committee's executive secretary since 1993, left the White House to take on her new post as director of NASA's space flight division in the office of external relations. Along with the PCAST job, she served as executive secretary for the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), an interagency group that is nominally chaired by the President and claims membership of the Vice President and the heads of each department and agency with programs in science and technology. NSTC's purpose is to coordinate the toughest issues and policies involving science and technology in the government's entire R&D portfolio.

If the description of NSTC seems similar to that of President Bush's Federal Coordinating Council of Science, Engineering and Technology (FCCSET), it's because NSTC is President Clinton's thinly disguised version of the same organization. It happens that Diaz served as executive secretary of FCCSET's committee on education and human resources, which consisted of more than 100 representatives from 16 Federal agencies and departments. Appointed to that position in 1992, Diaz was responsible for producing the government's first strategic plan on science, math, engineering and technology education, which bore the title "Pathways to Excellence."

With a master's degree in business administration from Marymount University of Virginia, Diaz has served in the Federal government for 20 years, primarily at NASA, where she has held a variety of management positions. Her husband is also a NASA executive: Alphonso (Al) Diaz is director of the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, February, page 57).

**N**ASA Administrator Daniel S. Goldin announced on 2 February that he had selected **Ghassam R. Asrar**, chief scientist for the Earth Observing System in the Office of Earth Sciences at NASA headquarters, to be the new associate administrator for

Earth science. The Earth Observing System is the current name for the Mission to Planet Earth.

As chief scientist for the Earth Observing System, Asrar led an international team that devised the priorities and programs for a series of advanced Earth-orbiting satellites, which will provide data on the interrelations between the planet's land mass, oceans, atmosphere and life of all sorts. "Our Earth science program is poised to enter a new era with the launch of the first Earth Observing System mission this summer," said Goldin. "This is an ideal time for Dr. Asrar to assume the leadership of this key NASA enterprise."

Born in Iran, Asrar received a PhD in environmental physics from Michigan State University in 1981 and came to NASA as a senior scientist in 1987.

**W**hen **Steve Schiff**, a soft-spoken moderate Republican of New Mexico, became chairman of the basic science subcommittee of the House Committee on Science at the start of the 105th Congress in 1995, his brother, Maurice, thought it ironic. After all, Steve, a five-term Congressman, had majored in political science at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, received a law degree from the University of New Mexico in 1972 and then became a county district attorney in his home state, but had never seriously studied the physical or biological sciences. By contrast, the Congressman's brother had earned a PhD in applied physics at the University of California, San Diego, in 1969, and worked as a physicist for the Navy, General Dynamics and ITT before starting his own software engineering firm, Elanix, in Westlake Village, California, an area dominated by personal computer makers.

"I was amused by the turn his career had taken," Maurice said of Steve, "but I always believed he would do well as a science policy maker." With Sandia National Laboratories, Kirtland Air Force Base, and scores of electronics, computer and communications companies in his district, Steve Schiff found an ideal (and safe) seat in the House. He championed "big science," voting consistently in favor of NASA's space station and the embattled Superconducting Super Collider even when the partially built SSC was doomed by Congress in 1993.

But on 30 January, Schiff announced he would not seek reelection in November because of his battle with squamous-cell skin cancer, which has kept him from attending sessions in the House since last April. Squamous-cell cancer is considered one of the more treatable forms of cancer, but

Schiff says he has a particularly aggressive case, which requires intensive chemotherapy. He has been working from home in Albuquerque by phone, fax, e-mail and television relays of House debates.

**O**n 1 March, **William S. Smith Jr.**, deputy Democratic chief of staff on the House Science Committee, joined the Associated Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) as vice president for programs. AURA, a consortium of 27 US universities and four affiliated foreign institutions, manages the National Optical Astronomy Observatories and the international Gemini Telescope Project, headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, under agreements with the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Space Telescope Science Institute under contract with NASA.

In his new position, Smith will work with the R&D agencies, lawmakers and their staffs in Congress, and AURA centers on issues of policy and funding.

At the House science committee, Smith provided analysis on the policies and programs of such agencies as NASA, NSF, the Department of Energy, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency. During the 103rd and 104th Congresses, when the Democrats ruled, he headed the development of a Federal budget alternative that emphasized the country's economic growth through science and technology. He also dealt with environmental issues, including matters of global climate change that involved interagency coordination in research. He had been staff director for the subcommittee on space. But since 1995, when Republicans took control of the House, Smith has been in the committee's rumble seat. "There's not much fun and excitement being in the minority," said Smith.

After he received his PhD in physical chemistry from Texas A&M University in 1974, Smith was a postdoc at the University of California, Irvine, and then worked as a physicist at the Federal Aviation Administration.

"The next several years will yield unique opportunities for AURA," said Smith. "Advances in ground-based astronomy, initiation of operations for the Gemini telescopes in Hawaii and Chile, together with the startling revelations from the Hubble Space Telescope and other space-based observations, will create an unprecedented potential for discovery and understanding. I'm just thrilled to discard my old role as an onlooker and delve into my new role as a manager of the science I admire."

**IRWIN GOODWIN ■**