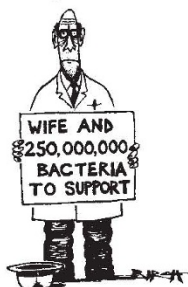


temporarily solved, the threat to the industrial bacteria collections has stimulated the UK Federation of Culture Collections to urge that a single government agency should take over responsibility for all of Britain's ten national collections. The problem is that the collections currently share seven sponsors, not all of which ascribe high priority to their sponsorship.

In the event, the industrial bacterial collection may also be saved, though not necessarily to the satisfaction of its users. The most likely outcome is that the agriculture ministry, the collection's sole sponsor, will relinquish responsibility to the University of Aberdeen from next April. Negotiations are under way for transferring the collection to the university's company, which handles the commercialization of research relevant to industry. The idea is that the collection should eventually operate as a commercial concern.

Under the arrangements now being discussed the ministry would pay the university for running the collection, although payment would be considerably less than current running costs of about £200,000 a year. Savings would be achieved largely by reducing the number of staff from twelve to about seven. Still to be determined are the university's commission on continuing business, the ministry's initial grant and what should be charged for consultancy and services. Although the proposal would save the collection, the microbiological community, which fears that commercialization could jeopardize some of the services currently on offer and increase costs to users, is glum about the prospects.



Last year, an inter-research council committee was set up to deal with the funding problems of culture collections as and when they arise. But the UK Federation of Culture Collections now argues that the committee's remit is too narrow. Together with three learned societies, including the Society for General Microbiology, the federation is hoping to persuade one government agency to take over responsibility for all ten microbial collections and to coordinate the formulation of a national policy for genome conservation including plant and animal cell lines as well as microbial cultures. As yet, however, no obvious agency has come forward, although the federation is hopeful that a meeting with the Department of Industry early in the year will be fruitful.

Judy Redfearn

Stanford University

At the helm

Palo Alto

When biologist Donald Kennedy became Stanford University's eighth president in August 1980, he pledged strong support for the humanities. Now, more than a year later, he has delivered; \$5.6 million in gifts and grants have helped to create a new Humanities Center. From other contributions, eight professorships have been endowed.

Nevertheless, some faculty members remain sceptical of Kennedy's efforts to make support for the arts and humanities comparable with that for the sciences. One humanist complains that too much time is spent on training and not enough on students' personal development. He thinks that a university should be primarily concerned with values. He is waiting for Kennedy to enunciate his values and to exert intellectual leadership. "You can buy administrative ability", the disgruntled professor believes.

During Kennedy's spell in Washington as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, he won wide respect for his administrative ability. Although he denies rumours about his own political ambitions, he still travels frequently to the capital.

He says that one of his objectives is to improve government understanding of the kinds of problems research universities face and about national science policy. He has the experience and the contacts to talk about these matters in the right places.

And lean, six-foot-one Kennedy believes that Stanford will be able to continue as a first-rate centre of basic research in spite of federal research cutbacks this year of 2 or 3 per cent. He is a self-avowed "relentless optimist". Nevertheless, he worries about reduced support for student financial aid. More than half of Stanford's 12,800 students receive scholarships. Research and training should go hand in hand, a truth not always recognized by the Reagan Administration, Kennedy says.

Kennedy remains doubtful that private support for universities will help to cover the gap created by diminished federal funding. Although private support for research has grown, it amounts to only 3.5 per cent of Stanford's total research budget of \$130 million a year.

The success of Stanford's own venture in commerce is necessarily still unclear. Last month, 71 companies signed licences for the gene-splicing and cloning patents developed by Stanford geneticist Dr Stanley Cohen and University of California biochemist Dr Herbert Boyer. Both scientists have made over their share of royalties to their universities. Initially, the licensing will yield \$710,000 annually, but the long-term potential could be much higher.

In the face of his campus's burgeoning



Donald Kennedy keeps ahead

biotechnology, Kennedy spends much of his time on the ethical questions of proprietary research. He has organized a conference in March with administrators, faculty scientists and representatives of industry to establish possible guidelines for the future. His own interest in science policy stems from his work as a founder of the human biology programme at Stanford. He was chairman of the biology department in 1965-72. His colleagues consider him a brilliant administrator and a fine scientist, able to articulate his views clearly.

Although a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Kennedy does not expect to return to the laboratory. His speciality is the neurophysiology of behaviour. He continues to work on two unpublished papers about how connections among nerve cells are responsible for fixed behavioural acts.

Meanwhile, he enjoys his contact with students and giving guest lectures, as well as advising eight freshmen. He has a reputation as an outstanding and entertaining lecturer. Thus, to illustrate man's evolution from the primitive fish *Amphioxus*, he will sing to the tune of "It's a long way to Tipperary",

Goodbye fins and gill slits,
Hello teeth and hair.

It's a long way from *Amphioxus*,
But we came from there.

Kennedy is blessed with enormous energy. But some of his faculty grumble that he is too enthusiastic, that he is also too generous, and that he resorts too quickly to resolving disagreements with university funds.

Students nevertheless like him. Graduating seniors have repeatedly asked him to address them. He attends more than 24 sherry parties annually in student dormitories.

Will his present enjoyment of his leadership of Stanford last? A close associate suggests that within five years Kennedy will start to think about a new post. It takes that long for the excitement and pleasure of the office to begin to dissipate.

At present it is possible to find Stanford's president at 6.30 a.m. each Tuesday and Friday morning running four miles over hilly terrain. Those who wish to discuss problems or to offer suggestions are welcome to join him. Most of his colleagues agree that one has to be pretty swift to outrun him.

Charlotte K. Beyers