

## US research budget

**Pork-barrel politics persists***Washington*

THE science budget was subjected to some congressional politics-as-usual earlier this month when some last-minute manoeuvres by the leadership of the House of Representatives diverted \$5 million from the proposed National Center for Advanced Materials (NCAM) at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in California to a new materials facility at Catholic University in Washington, DC. Outraged opponents had no sooner finished protesting — calling it pork-barrel politics and a subversion of Congress procedures — than a second amendment, giving \$5 million to Columbia University, was swiftly approved. One million dollars of this came out of funds earmarked for upgrading the Van de Graaf accelerators at Yale University and the University of Washington.

The amendments, offered on the House floor to the fiscal 1984 Energy Department authorization, were highly unusual. Representative James Sensenbrenner (Republican, Wisconsin) protested that the House Science and Technology Committee, which drafted the Energy Department authorization after months of hearings, had never even seen the two proposals. After learning of the proposal only the day before, Sensenbrenner said he discovered from Catholic University that there were no architectural plans for the facility (which will cost a total of \$13.9 million) and not even a written proposal for it. Several House staff members conceded that the action was "politically motivated" and a bit of "entrepreneurship" on the part of the universities.

The facility at Catholic University, the Vitreous State Laboratory, is spread over three buildings, and the new money would allow construction of a dedicated facility. The laboratory was originally supported by the Office of Naval Research to carry out basic studies on glassy materials and their applications, such as encapsulation of nuclear waste.

The Berkeley proposal, supported strongly by White House science adviser George Keyworth, had earlier this year been strongly criticized by materials scientists, who felt that it had been rushed into the President's budget request without adequate scientific review. The Science and Technology Committee had already cut \$5 million from the President's request for NCAM in response to this concern, before the bill reached the House floor.

The president of Catholic University, Father William Byron, acknowledged in an interview that the university thought of requesting funds for its laboratory only when it became aware in March of the administration's interest in materials research and of the problems NCAM was facing. "Certainly the procedure [scientific peer review and committee review] ought to be

followed", he said, "but in this case it wasn't going to happen anyway." He said he was confident that the work at the laboratory would stand up to any peer review, and he contended that the funding for Catholic University would not actually take money away from NCAM over its five-year construction period. "It's just a reallocation for the first year", he said.

One House staff member cynically observed, however, that "it makes you almost nostalgic for the way NCAM got into the budget."

Byron apparently approached the Speaker of the House, Representative Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, who then wrote a letter to the Science and Technology Committee chairman, Representative Don Fuqua (Democrat, Florida) on 28 April asking for his support. By that time the committee had already completed its mark-up of the authorization bill, however, and the only option remaining was an amendment on the House floor. Byron said that the Speaker had requested an add-on, not a redirection of funding; but as it ended up,

one selling point of the amendment was that members were not being asked to increase the budget in voting for it.

The amendment was introduced by Representative Norman Mineta (Democrat, California), whose district is adjacent to Berkeley. "Everyone knew it was the Speaker's amendment", said one House aide, who speculated that Mineta may have lent his endorsement in return for future assurances on NCAM.

The \$5 million diverted to the Columbia project, to be called the National Center for Chemical Research, was taken from the general authorizations for energy research, magnetic fusion and general science, and the specific authorization for the Yale and Washington accelerator upgrade. Yale officials, who were taken by surprise, said cutting their budget from \$8 million to \$7 million was not a "mortal wound" but would cause serious injury to their plans, and they would seek to preserve their budget when the bill comes before the Senate.

Both Catholic University and Columbia had retained the services of a Washington lobbying firm, Schlossberger-Cassidy and Associates, which has been aggressively recruiting university clients in the past year.

**Stephen Budiansky**

**Export Administration Act****Congress backs scientific freedom***Washington*

CONGRESS has taken an important first step towards redrafting the controversial Export Administration Act in a way that will make it harder in future for the government to prevent the publication of basic scientific information. But the amendment — accepted last week by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives — falls far short of the changes advocated last October by the National Academy of Sciences.

The act, which expires at the end of September, is one of the principal methods by which the Administration has attempted to halt what it describes as a haemorrhage of US technical and scientific secrets to the Soviet Union. It has also been used by the Department of Commerce to restrict the access of foreign scientists to militarily sensitive scientific information. In a report last year, the National Academy of Sciences recommended that unclassified information that was domestically available and not directly related to national security should be exempted from the act's formal licensing procedure.

A successor act submitted to Congress last month by the Commerce Department (see *Nature* 14 April, p.562) did not incorporate the academy's amendment. But last week the Foreign Affairs Committee voted in favour of an amendment inserting language in the preamble of the law which stresses the United States' commitment to free scientific exchange.

The two sentences, proposed by Repre-

sentative Lee Hamilton (Democrat, Indiana), say that it is the policy of the United States to sustain a "vigorous" scientific enterprise. "To do so requires protecting the ability of scientists and other scholars further to communicate their research findings by means of publication, teaching, conferences and other means of scholarly exchange".

A third sentence which opponents of the act wanted inserted in the preamble, and which would have made it clear that the act's provisions could not apply to scientific communication, was dropped because too few members of the committee were prepared to give their support. But the truncated amendment may nevertheless have considerable importance. Representative Hamilton told the committee he intended to provide language for inclusion in the committee's report of the act which would spell out Congress's view that science depended on open publication.

Congressional reports on legislation have legal standing and are used by courts to determine findings. The committee has not yet received or endorsed the proposed language, but the report is likely to make it easier for scientists to challenge the application of the act to actions such as the submission of papers to international scientific meetings. One of the most controversial uses of the act was a decision by the Commerce Department in 1980 to prevent Soviet scientists from attending an American Vacuum Society symposium on magnetic bubble devices.

**Peter David**