

## New vaccine institute planned for UK

### LONDON

Plans for a new research centre dedicated to the development of vaccines, to be called the Edward Jenner Institute for Vaccine Research, were announced last month as a unique joint venture between three government agencies and the pharmaceutical giant Glaxo.

Glaxo of Greenford, Middlesex, will pay £10 million (US\$15.7 million) to build and equip the laboratories on a site alongside the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's Institute for Animal Health in Compton, Berkshire.

The centre is being set up as a model of the type of collaboration between industry, government agencies and academic institutions endorsed last year in the government's science and technology policy document *Realizing Our Potential*. David Hunt, the UK science minister, said at the launch that the government wanted to promote a close working relationship between the science base, industry and government. "This Institute is an example of just this kind of partnership in action," he said.

Four groups, largely coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology, will initially fund the running costs of the institute for 10 years. Glaxo will pay half of the £6 million a year needed, the remainder being met through government agencies — £0.5 million from the Department of Health, £1.5 million from the Medical Research Council and £1 million from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

In return for its investment, Glaxo is to be given first option on the development and licensing of any candidate vaccines to emerge from work carried out at the institute. In turn, the Jenner Institute would receive royalty payments on any product brought to the market by Glaxo.

The new institute will support around 30 researchers and technicians and 20 Ph.D. students. It aims to provide a better understanding of the immune system and to develop better predictive animal models for studying candidate vaccines.

It is hoped that the institute will be in full operation by 1996 — which marks the 200th anniversary of Jenner's first vaccination.

MAGGIE VERRALL  
News staff, *Nature*



The new guard: (left to right) Sen. Mark O. Hatfield (Oregon), Rep. John Edward Porter (Illinois), Rep. Robert L. Livingston (Louisiana), Sen. Arlen Specter (Pennsylvania), Rep. Thomas J. Bliley Jr (Virginia) and Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum (Kansas).

## End of an era as GOP sweeps Hill

A huge administrative building now taking

### WASHINGTON

shape in front of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, will take its name not from some exalted Nobel laureate, but from a late Kentucky congressman, William H. Natcher.

As longtime chair of the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations subcommittee which funds NIH, Natcher arguably did more than anyone in the United States in recent years to steer billions of dollars of taxpayers' money into biomedical research.

Natcher briefly chaired the full appropriations committee, as well as the health subpanel, before his death last March. The question of who could fill his shoes as the most steadfast ally of biomedical research in Congress was an open one, even before November's election ensured a complete rout of the old Democrat guard in Congress and their replacement by some less familiar faces from the Republican party (GOP, 'Grand Old Party').

After initial panic — aroused by fears the arrival of budget-cutting Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate could only serve to further constrain research funding — biomedical research lobbyists in Washington have drawn reassurance from the fact that important health committees will be chaired by long-standing friends of NIH, such as Mark O. Hatfield (Oregon) and John Edward Porter (Illinois).

But the reality is that the likes of Hatfield and Porter will find it tougher to defend their appropriations turf than their Democratic predecessors ever did. The budget-cutting impetus in the new House, in particular, will place more power in the hands of the Budget committee, which is less beholden to special interests than are appropriations subcommittees, and can be expected to impose tight overall spending limits for appropriators to meet.

The Republicans' agenda to change the way that Congress works implies that all

committees — including those covering health re-

search — will lose some power over their respective fiefdoms. As this comes to pass, healthy funding for biomedical research will come only from strong overall support in both houses, rather than merely from the staunch support of barons in the Natcher mould.

That medium-term prospect will not prevent lobbying-as-usual by universities and other research centres of the 104th Congress's new elite. One of its members who will need little persuasion is Senator Hatfield, new chairman of Senate appropriations, and a (whisper it) liberal Republican who worked hard last year with Senator Tom Harkin (Iowa, Democrat) to insert a 1 per cent health insurance surcharge to pay for extra biomedical research in the ill-fated health-care reform proposals. His counterpart on the House side will be Robert L. Livingston (Louisiana), who was hand-picked by House speaker Newt Gingrich for his energy and reforming zeal.

At the subcommittee level, the new chairman of the subcommittee that Natcher once led will be John Edward Porter — a vigorous supporter of biomedical research. Porter has issued a resounding defence of biomedical research on health and economic grounds and has called for more generous Congressional funding of NIH. The Senate Labor, HHS and Education subcommittee will be chaired by another friend of NIH, Arlen Specter (Pennsylvania).

While the appropriators decide how many federal dollars go into biomedical research in the United States, the authorizing committees set the legislative framework for that research. And although their powers are more subtle, the partisan nature of these panels is more pronounced.

Nowhere is this more apparent than on the House Energy and Commerce panel, where chairman John D. Dingell (Democrat, Michigan) was accustomed to pursuing his well-known concerns about scien-