

# Regulating Biotechnology by White House Panel

medicines produced by biotechnology. Until now, federally sponsored gene-splicing research considered potentially hazardous to the environment or to humans has been regulated by the National Institutes of Health, which uses an outside panel of scientists, known as the Recombinant-DNA Advisory Committee, to review experiments individually.

## Membership Expanded

Although the committee recently expanded its membership to include ecologists and experts in ethics, to review genetic tests on humans and in the field, critics have complained that it is ill-suited for reviewing experiments conducted outside of the laboratory and incapable of regulating biotechnology companies.

N.I.H. rules require only the recipients of federal support to submit their gene-splicing proposals to the panel, although companies have in the past also submitted proposals voluntarily and abided by the agency's final decisions.

Concern over the lack of industry regulation of such experiments as field tests of potentially hazardous, genetically altered organisms prompted the E.P.A. last year to propose using laws governing toxic substances and pesticides to regulate the release of such organisms and other products of biotechnology.

But the E.P.A.'s plans were stalled after some White House officials expressed fears that the rules might be

unduly restrictive to companies and might hamper the companies' ability to compete internationally.

The interagency working group, which was formed partly in response to those concerns, concluded that the E.P.A.'s plans would not be unduly restrictive and that the biotechnology industry could be adequately regulated, at least at present, without the creation of new laws.

The panel's findings came as a relief to many biotechnology companies and researchers who were afraid that developing new regulations might further delay testing of potential products for introduction into the market.

"Our position all along has been that all of the products could be accommodated under the various existing statutes," said Alan Goldhammer, a technology associate at the Industrial Biotechnology Association in Rockville, Md.

However, Jeremy Rifkin, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends and a longtime critic of genetic-engineering research, complained that the panel's report neglected to consider the serious damage harmful new organisms could create.

"I think it's very difficult to try to squeeze the genetic age into chemical and petrochemical laws," he said. "While there are some similarities between chemicals and organisms, there are important differences. They're alive, they can reproduce, and you can't recall them."

—KIM McDONALD

# Center Founded by Robert Hutchins Duties; Reasons Not Given



CHRONICLE PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN C. PHILLIPS  
Allen Weinstein says he inherited a "near-bankrupt institution" in the Hutchins center.

other problems continued after Mr. Hutchins's death in 1977. In 1979 it moved to the Santa Barbara campus, where it went through four presidents in five years—not counting Mr. Weinstein.

Since Mr. Weinstein took over the presidency early last year, the center has been considerably more active and more in the public eye than it had

and visibility" (*The Chronicle*, September 26).

Mr. Weinstein said he did not fully understand the reasons for the board's action, which he said occurred very suddenly. He argued that he had not been given due process and had, in fact, resigned his position before the board voted against him.

Mr. Weinstein noted that he had "inherited a near-bankrupt institution" and had not had the time to put the center back on its feet financially. The program he put together for the center "speaks for itself," he added.

## Washington Center Formed

Since he left Santa Barbara, Mr. Weinstein and a number of people he appointed to the center's board of directors have incorporated a new Center for Democracy, with headquarters in Washington. The new center will take over many of the projects initiated by Mr. Weinstein at the Hutchins center, including a major study of campaign-finance reform.

While neither Mr. Huttenback nor Mr. Kieffer would comment at length on the dismissal, they both expressed hopes for the future of the center.

Mr. Kieffer said he would like to see "better-planned and more appropriately spaced" conferences and other programs under the new leadership.

Mr. Huttenback added that he

## The 1985-86

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William W. Turnbull, Chairman, Fellowship Committee

Applications and inquiries should be sent to: Vera M. House, Assistant to the Chairman, Fellowship Committee, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541, 609-734-5152.

Applications for 1985-86 will be accepted until February 15. Awards will be made in April.

## 1984 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

### Christian Gauss Award

#### Irvin Ehrenpreis

*Swift: The Man, His Works and the Age*  
Volume III, *Dean Swift*  
Harvard University Press

### Science Award

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*Frozen Star: Of Pulsars, Black Holes and the Fate of Stars*  
Freundlich Books

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