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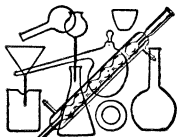
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## LEUKEMIA CLUE

### Teminism marches on

A man named Howard Temin and an enzyme called RNA-dependent DNA polymerase have spurred scores of scientists to work day and night in pursuit of clues in what has become molecular biology's newest treasure hunt. The prize holds the promise of refined understanding of the fundamental workings of RNA and DNA, with particular implications for insight into cancer.

Ever since May, when Dr. Temin of the University of Wisconsin at Madison shook the biological community by demonstrating that in certain instances DNA can be made from an RNA template (classical theory held that the process worked only in the reverse order), investigators have been hard at work confirming and expanding his experiments (SN: 9/19, p. 243). The latest victory has been scored by a team from the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md.

Drs. Robert C. Gallo, Sue Yang and Robert C. Ting have identified Dr. Temin's enzyme in the lymphocytes of patients with acute lymphocytic leukemia. Preliminary studies indicate that RNA-dependent DNA polymerase, however, is not present in lymphocytes from healthy individuals. The enzyme is key to the production of DNA from RNA and has been associated with RNA viruses suspected of causing cancer. In

cultures of malignant and normal cells, Dr. Gallo and his colleagues confirmed that the malignant cells could make DNA from an RNA model because of the presence of RNA-dependent DNA polymerase.

Says Dr. Frank Rauscher, NCI's scientific director for etiology, "The implications of this finding of the RNA enzyme in leukemia patients are tremendous. It opens avenues for diagnosis and therapy."

At present, RNA-dependent DNA polymerase has been found in the blood of only a few leukemia patients and in several persons with Burkitt's lymphoma. But Dr. Gallo speculates that further tests will reveal its presence in individuals with other types of cancer as well.

If it can be determined that the enzyme is widely associated with malignancy, and if it can be detected in persons whose disease has not reached the acute stages of those studied so far, tests for its presence could serve as a new diagnostic tool—possibly one that would enable doctors to identify cancer early.

In hopes of perfecting such a test, the scientists are striving to purify the enzyme, which could then be injected into rabbits that would develop antibodies to it. □

### MORTON FOR HICKEL

### Changes at Interior



Interior  
*Hickel: No frontiersmen for Nixon.*

There is an inclination among environmentalists to attribute the environmental crisis to the exploitation philosophies of the American frontier, which they say are suicidal today as resources diminish and population grows.

Thus when President Nixon nomi-

nated Alaskan Walter J. Hickel to be Secretary of the Interior, there was a great gnashing of teeth among conservationists. Here, they said, was a man whose values were molded by the last American frontier, Alaska, and who was the antithesis of the new values they said were necessary. Conservation-minded Senators vowed to crucify Hickel during his confirmation hearings. But at the hearings, the Alaskan managed to convince many of these Senators that he was a man of integrity and flexibility who was willing to learn not only the language but the substance of conservation.

In the time since, Hickel had become the darling of the environmentalists—who have realized that the frontier ethic is not all exploitation but also includes directness, openness and sturdy independence, qualities which Hickel turned to their interests. In dealing with the Alaska pipeline controversy (SN: 5/30, p. 528), the Louisiana oil spill (SN: 3/14, p. 263) and mercury pollution (SN: 4/18, p. 388), Hickel showed his willingness, if not always to make conservation in-



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terests paramount, at least to give them full consideration.

But Hickel's frontier style ignored the Byzantine realities of political life in Washington, D.C., realities which exist whichever party is in power. Sometimes these realities allow at least the appearance of rugged individualism as part of an Administration's image. But Vice President Agnew (whom Hickel criticized for his hyperbole) apparently occupied the only such niche in the Nixon Administration, and the kind of individualism allowed was only to be of the accepted political variety. Hickel's outspokenness not only on conservation but also on last spring's Cambodian invasion clearly did not fit. And so, after months of speculation that it would happen, last week President Nixon fired Hickel and six of his top staffers.

**Named by President Nixon** to succeed Hickel was Rep. Rogers C. B. Morton (R-Md.), chairman of the Republican National Committee. Morton is pretty much an unknown quantity with regard to his conservationist philosophies. But he has been an able National Committee chairman, and has also showed some independence.

Confirmation hearings for Morton will be held after the new Congress convenes in January. Conservationist Senators who were so vigorously opposed to Hickel in 1969 are treading more softly in the case of Morton. Although they point to what they say is Morton's unspectacular voting record in the House on conservation issues, this time they are far more willing to wait and see what happens. If Morton should turn out to be a friend of the conservationists as well as a man who can negotiate the intricate cross currents of politics, there could be a net gain for their interests. □

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