
Science Legislation

Science Legislation and the Holiday Recess

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TWO PRE-HOLIDAY EVENTS have revealed both the President's and the Congress' interest in science legislation, but the avalanche of last-minute Congressional business relegated them to inside and inconspicuous places in the newspapers, and they may have escaped the attention of many scientists.

First in order of occurrence was the President's reply to the letter from Isaiah Bowman and his Committee supporting the Bush Report. The full text of the President's letter follows:

December 14, 1945

My dear Doctor Bowman:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter dated November 24, 1945, on behalf of the newly organized Committee supporting the Bush report, regarding the science legislation now pending before the Congress.

I am keenly interested in the development of research and of the appropriate Federal assistance therefor. Brilliant results have been achieved by the scientists during the war. The people deserve these results in peace as well.

My views on the soundest form of Federal assistance have been stated both in my Message to Congress on September 6, 1945, and in the statements made by the Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion and the Director of the Budget.

These views were expressed after the fullest consideration of the best interests of all concerned, after consultation with scientists, with public administrators and with students of Government, after considering the Bush report and the committee reports on which it was based, and after weighing the views expressed in your letter which had previously been called to my attention.

I appreciate the interest taken in this subject by members of your Committee, and feel sure that their basic objectives of freedom of research, and non partisan administration of a program of aid to scientific research and education, will be attained under such an organization as I have recommended.

I am confident that I can count on them to support scientific research with the same zeal that has made our scientists so eminent.

Very sincerely,
(sgd) Harry S. Truman

Dr. Isaiah Bowman
President, Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland.

The second event was the introduction into the Senate on 21 December of S. 1720, the science legislation after complete revision and redrafting. Sponsors of the newly drafted bill are Senators Kilgore, Johnson, Pepper, Fulbright, and Saltonstall.

The new bill has drawn heavily upon the testimony which was presented at the October hearings, as most scientists assumed and hoped it would. As it must, it translates the wishes of scientists into the practical terms of governmental procedure, and where it cannot accept certain proposals, it offers—or attempts to offer—workable compromises. The text of the 10-page bill will be issued in a subsequent number of *Science*, and therefore only a skeleton analysis of its main features will be given at this time.

The unique feature of S. 1720 is the establishment of a strong board to function coordinately with a single director-administrator. The latter will be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. Within the proposed Science Foundation there shall be divisions of (a) mathematical and physical sciences, (b) biological sciences, (c) social sciences, (d) health and medical sciences, (e) national defense, (f) engineering and technology, (g) scientific personnel and education, and (h) publications and information. Associated with each division is a "divisional scientific committee."

The National Science Board consists of nine "qualified" members appointed by the President for three-year terms, plus the chairmen of the several divisional committees. This Board may make recommendations directly to the President and the Congress, and the nine presidential appointees shall advise with the administrator in the appointment of the divisional committees. Members of the Board shall receive per diem compensation.

The bill provides for minimum percentage expenditures of 15 per cent each for national defense and health-medicine, and 25 per cent additional to be apportioned among the states for research and development.

While dedicating to the public patents, inventions, and discoveries growing out of federally financed research, the bill provides for retention of patent rights by contractors or inventors when "fair and equitable

and consistent with the national interest" and provided there has been substantial private contribution to the cost. Remaining sections provide for international cooperation, interdepartmental coordination, fellowships and scholarships, and a register of scientific and technical personnel.

This, in brief, is the bill to which attention should now be directed. It will completely supersede S. 1297 (the Kilgore bill), but Senator Magnuson is not committed. Whether he will attempt to get S. 1285 out of committee in response to the strong lobby started by the Committee supporting the Bush Report is not predictable. S. 1720 is a serious endeavor to meet the demand of the majority of the scientists by setting up a board of qualified men and by making this board a check and balance to the administrator, without nullifying the latter's responsibility to the President and the Congress. The chief patent issue is reason-

ably met without sacrificing the aim to bring some system to patent policy within Government laboratories. It compromises with the House and with the Military on the administration of the Division of National Defense, and it follows the wishes of the majority of scientists by including the social sciences.

It was in the conviction that the bill does combine the best features of the original legislation, and that it makes use of the best and most workable recommendations contributed by scientists at the October hearings, that Senators Fulbright and Saltonstall have joined in sponsoring the new bill. The latter is in committee and has been issued in the Preliminary Report (Subcommittee on War Mobilization Report No. 7, 21 December 1945) in order that scientists may study S. 1720 and comment before it is reported out of committee. The full text of the bill will be published in the next issue of *Science*.

The Committee for a National Science Foundation, formed at the invitation of Dr. Harold C. Urey and Dr. Harlow Shapley, and now located in the Hotel Astor, New York City, has issued a statement dated 28 December, 1945. It is addressed to Senators Kilgore, Magnuson, Johnson (Colo.), Pepper, Fulbright and Saltonstall. Its signers include Albert Einstein, Enrico J. Fermi, George R. Minot, Otto Meyerhof, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Harold C. Urey, Harlow Shapley and some 200 others. The text follows:

Knowledge secured by research has achieved public recognition as the necessary foundation of sound programs for national welfare, health, security and world order. It is clear that the magnitude of the research task which must be accomplished promptly in the interest of the nation and of civilization requires expenditures so great that government aid is required. The extensive public hearings just completed in Washington under the joint chairmanship of Senators Kilgore and Magnuson collected testimony from all sides which emphasized this point. Because it is believed that the public may be in doubt concerning the views of research men on the feasibility and practicality of scientific advance under government auspices, the following statements are made in the conviction that they are supported by the judgment of a majority of scientists:

1. Federal support of research must supplement funds for scientific inquiry from private philanthropic and business sources if science is to make its essential contribution to the welfare and security of mankind in the difficult years ahead.

2. The freedom of inquiry upon which science is dependent can and must be guaranteed for research under government no less than private auspices.

3. The government should support research in all fields of fundamental scientific inquiry relevant to national interest without arbitrary exclusion of any area.

4. Scientific findings resulting from Federally financed research activities should receive publication and should be dedicated to the welfare of the public.

5. The training of research personnel through national scholarships and fellowships for undergraduate and graduate study should be open to all on the basis of ability and scholastic achievement, and should be available for work in any qualified institution in any recognized field of science.

6. Although there is a serious division of opinion on the question whether administrative responsibility should be given to a governing board or to a single administrator, it should be possible to devise a plan of organization which will meet the major objections to either alternative.

These six points are in harmony with that part of President Truman's message of Sept. 6 to the Congress which urged the early establishment of a Federal agency to promote and support scientific research and aid to training of research personnel. An analysis of the testimony presented at the Senate hearings under the joint chairmanship of Senator Kilgore and Senator Magnuson on pending science bills indicates that there is sufficient agreement on these points to justify their utilization as a basis of legislation drafting.

The signers of this statement have a profound conviction that a program of Federal aid to research is vital to the national interest and that legislation acceptable if not wholly satisfactory to those who hold divergent points of view about particular questions of function and organization can be drafted. We stand ready to cooperate in the revision of the bills recently considered at the Senate hearings on pending national science legislation. Our purpose is to serve the national interest by securing the collaboration of the maximum number of qualified scientists in a united attack on the scientific problems confronting the nation.

A complete list of the signers will appear in the issue of 11 January 1946.