

# The Inter-Society Committee for a National Science Foundation: Report for 1947

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THE INTER-SOCIETY COMMITTEE FOR A National Science Foundation was formed to unite scientists in a common front on the attempt to secure a National Science Foundation in 1947. That effort failed. It failed in spite of the fact that Congress, the President, and practically all scientists agreed that a National Science Foundation was necessary. The Foundation was killed by disagreement within the Government over the *kind* of Foundation that was needed.

With nearly unanimous agreement that a National Science Foundation of some type is necessary, scientists will try again to secure the necessary legislation. Before that effort starts, it is time to review the history of the Inter-Society Committee and to ask why its efforts to influence the provisions of the legislation were unsuccessful. It is not necessary here to discuss the relative merits of the specific features of science foundation bills that have been proposed in the last few years; that has been done in a series of articles in *Science* and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The 1946 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Boston provided an opportunity for scientists to consider how they should attempt to secure in the 80th Congress the National Science Foundation that the 79th Congress had failed to create. It was generally admitted that the disagreements of scientists themselves during the 79th Congress had contributed somewhat to the failure to secure enactment of S. 1850. The Inter-Society Committee was conceived as a way of preventing the repetition of that error. It grew out of an informal meeting attended by W. P. Anslow, Jr., Joseph C. Boyce, Detlev W. Bronk, Robert Chambers, Karl T. Compton, James B. Conant, Watson Davis, H. Feshbach, William A. Higinbotham, Leo M. Hurvich, M. Stanley Livingston, Kirtley F. Mather, R. Newton Mayall, Fred A. Mettler, Stuart Mudd, Talcott Parsons, Philip N. Powers, Morton D. Schweitzer, Harlow Shapley, Robert M. Yerkes, and Donald Young.

These men decided that the AAAS was the organization most representative of all science and that it should take the initiative in organizing scientists for a united effort to secure a National Science Foundation. The Council of the AAAS accepted these decisions and on December 29 adopted a resolution asking the President of the AAAS to appoint two representatives and to in-

vite the president of each affiliated society to appoint two representatives to the Inter-Society Committee for a National Science Foundation.

Acting quickly on this resolution, President Conant wrote on January 4 to the presidents of all of the organizations affiliated with the AAAS and to a few other national scientific and educational associations, inviting each to name two representatives to the new committee. He asked Kirtley F. Mather, one of the AAAS representatives, to call the first meeting of the committee.

On February 5 Dr. Mather informed the representatives that the first meeting would be held in Washington, D. C., on February 23. At that time no science foundation bills had been introduced into Congress. Several members of Congress, however, were known to be interested in such legislation and were invited to meet with the Inter-Society Committee on February 23. (Senator Elbert Thomas was the only one who accepted. He was present for an hour or so after adjournment of the meeting.)

Two days after the announcement of the committee meeting was made, two bills were introduced into the Senate. S. 525, introduced by Senator Elbert Thomas of Utah, was identical with S. 1850 as the Senate had passed that bill the year before. S. 526, introduced by Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, and others, was a new bill which was similar in many respects to the amendment to S. 1850 which Senator Smith had proposed in the 79th Congress and similar also to the earlier Magnuson Bill. Shortly afterward, four bills were introduced into the House of Representatives: H. R. 942, which was identical with S. 1850 as it had been reported to the Senate the previous year, and H. R. 1815, H. R. 1830, and H. R. 1834, all three of which were identical with S. 526. Later, H. R. 2027, also identical with S. 526, was introduced. Earlier articles in *Science* have given the content of these bills.

When the Inter-Society Committee met on February 23 it was composed of representatives, usually two each, of approximately 75 organizations which had accepted President Conant's invitation of January 4. They elected an Executive Committee of the following members: chairman, Edmund E. Day, president, Cornell University; vice-chairman, Harlow Shapley, Harvard University; secretary-treasurer, Dael Wolfe, American Psychological Association; members at large of the Executive Committee, Isaiah Bowman, president, Johns Hopkins University; Ralph W. Gerard, University of Chicago; R. G. Gustavson, chancellor, University of Nebraska;

<sup>1</sup>A defense of the President's veto of S. 526 is given by Don K. Price in "The deficiencies of the National Science Foundation Bill" (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 1947, 3, 291-294; 310). A comparison of the bills in the 80th Congress is given by Dael Wolfe in "What kind of Science Foundation shall we have?" (*Journal of Higher Education*, 1947, 18, 182-188).

Henry Allen Moe, Guggenheim Foundation; W. A. Noyes, University of Rochester; and Douglas M. Whitaker, Stanford University.

The Executive Committee was voted authority to replace any of its own members who were unable to serve.

It was generally agreed by the committee that the bills then before Congress were drafts, that amendments might be made, that the committee should not become too involved at that time in discussions of details, but that it should be interested in the main features of the bills which had been introduced. A discussion of the two Senate bills, S. 525 and S. 526, was therefore called for. John Q. Stewart of Princeton, who was present as an observer, started the discussion, reporting that he had assisted in writing S. 526 and that the basis for that bill was the amendment to S. 1850 which had been proposed by Senator Smith in the 79th Congress. The greatest difference between that bill and S. 525, he pointed out, was that S. 526 called for a large board which would select an executive committee which in turn would select the Director of the Foundation. In contrast, S. 525, like the previous year's S. 1850, authorized the President to appoint the Foundation's Administrator.

After describing differences between the two bills, Prof. Stewart suggested a questionnaire as a guide to the Executive Committee in interpreting the attitudes of committee members. After further discussion, Dr. Mather proposed an off-the-record straw vote on the preferred type of administration. The vote was taken with the following result:

Favoring a single administrator to be appointed by the President.....	41
Favoring the large-board type of administration suggested in S. 526.....	22
Favoring administration by a small board such as the Atomic Energy Commission.....	32
No preference among the three alternatives.....	18

Straw votes were also taken on two other points on which much discussion had centered: (1) The vote was unanimously in favor of including provision for fellowships and scholarships; all but 18 members were in favor of providing for undergraduate scholarships. (2) All but four were in favor of including the social sciences in the research program of the Foundation.

In closing the meeting, Chairman Day summarized the consensus of the group: Despite their differing opinions on individual features of the bills before Congress, scientists—all of them—had to get together to support the kind of National Science Foundation favored by a majority, for if they failed to agree and failed to make their support unanimous, there might be no Foundation.

After the meeting adjourned, John H. Teeter informed the officers that the House of Representatives Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce would hold public

hearings on science foundation bills on March 6 and 7. Mr. Teeter assisted the House Committee in arranging these hearings. A few days later the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce invited Chairman Day to testify on March 6.

On March 5 the Executive Committee held its first meeting. Present were Day, Shapley, Wolffe, Gerard, Gustavson, and Whitaker. Isaiah Bowman and W. A. Noyes had been unable to accept their appointments, Dr. Bowman because of the pressure of other duties, Dr. Noyes because of ill health. The Committee had not at that time, and did not later, receive a reply from Mr. Moe to his invitation to serve.

The Executive Committee considered possible alternates for Bowman and Noyes. It was agreed that Day would discuss with Bowman the selection of a person who had served actively in the group which had the year before formed the *Committee in Support of the Bush Report*. The Executive Committee agreed that a representative of that group was highly desirable. C. G. Suits, vice-president of the General Electric Company, was chosen as a replacement for W. A. Noyes and accepted appointment.

The Executive Committee considered at some length the position it should take and the kind of testimony which Chairman Day should offer on the following day. It interpreted its task as reporting the majority judgment of scientists rather than one of making its own decisions as to what should or should not be included in a science foundation bill. In line with this policy, the Committee decided that for the time being it would not support or criticize the specific points of any bill, but would limit itself to support of those features which were generally agreed upon.

On March 6, Chairman Day testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. After a description of the Inter-Society Committee, he testified that the foundation bill, whatever its specific provisions, should include the following features:

(1) Provision for the support of fundamental research without reference to questions of immediate practical applications.

(2) Freedom for the Foundation to investigate problems in any scientific area by any appropriate method.

(3) Provision for scholarships and fellowships for the training of young scientists.

(4) Coordination of scientific research conducted by other groups in order that the Foundation should have both the responsibility and the authority to assume leadership in planning ways to meet the country's scientific needs.

In conclusion, Day asked for permission to submit later a statement summarizing the judgment of members of the Inter-Society Committee on specific provisions of the bills. Chairman Wolverton replied that his commit-

tee would very much appreciate receiving such a statement and asked that it be submitted at the earliest possible opportunity.

On March 11 the Executive Committee mailed a questionnaire to all members of the Inter-Society Committee. Questions were included on four points: preferred type of administration; patent provisions; inclusion of the social sciences; and inclusion of undergraduate scholarships. The questions were preceded by a discussion of the issues involved, a statement of the judgment of the Executive Committee on the point in question, and a summary of the views expressed by the witnesses who had testified at the House Committee hearings on March 6 and 7. Air mail return of the questionnaire was requested, since at that time we understood that early action would be taken by the House Committee.

On March 19 replies had been received from 73 per cent of the members of the entire Committee. The results were summarized and presented in a formal report which went to all members of the committees in the Senate and House of Representatives which were considering science foundation bills. Copies were also sent to the authors of those bills.

On the question of preferred type of administration, two-thirds of the members preferred a single administrator. The exact tally was: single administrator appointed by the President, 63 per cent; 48-man foundation provided in S. 526, 18 per cent; small, full-time commission, 18 per cent. These were the preferences. The members, however, in large majority considered the bill as a whole more important than the question of administration, and 86 per cent said that, if necessary to secure passage of a bill, they would be willing to accept any of the three types of administration.

On the question of inclusion of the social sciences, 49 per cent favored specific inclusion in the bill; 48 per cent favored permissive inclusion (allowing the Foundation to support work in the social sciences whenever it saw fit); 2 per cent favored excluding the social sciences.

On the parallel question of what treatment of the social sciences was acceptable, 98 per cent were willing to accept either outright or permissive inclusion; only 37 per cent were willing to accept the bill if the social sciences were definitely excluded.

On the question of undergraduate scholarships, 86 per cent favored inclusion and 14 per cent favored prohibition of undergraduate scholarships.

On the patent question, 94 per cent thought that no special stand should be taken by the Committee. The other 6 per cent believed that we should recommend adoption of the patent provisions contained in S. 525 and H. R. 942 (the S. 1850 provisions).

The major results of this questionnaire were in close agreement with two other surveys, one conducted by the Federation of American Scientists and the other made among California scientists. All three of these polls, al-

though conducted in different ways, with different groups, and at different times, agreed closely in showing that scientists overwhelmingly wanted a science foundation, that a two-to-one majority preferred a single administrator, and that they believed that the social sciences should be included.

The agreement of these three polls, and the fact that the members of the Inter-Society Committee were the chosen representatives on science legislation of over 75 scientific organizations, persuaded the Executive Committee that its report to the Senate and House committees represented the best evidence available on what the majority of scientists in America considered wise in a National Science Foundation.

Yet little attention was paid to that report by either Congressional committee. Congressional leaders appeared to have decided what features should be included in the bill and to have little interest in any views not supporting those decisions. On March 19 I sent to Senator Smith a copy of the report described above. It indicated a two-to-one opposition to the administrative proposals of S. 526. On that same date, Senator Smith wrote me saying that any further consideration of the questioned features of the proposed legislation would be at the risk of not having it considered in the first session of the 80th Congress. The Committee on Labor and Public Welfare therefore held no public hearings. On March 20 it reported favorably S. 526, with one or two minor amendments. Chief of these was cutting the Foundation membership from 48 to 24.

The Executive Committee met again on April 28 with Day, Shapley, Wolfe, Gerard, Suits, and Whitaker present. Gustavson was absent. Homer W. Smith, who had been active in the earlier *Committee in Support of the Bush Report*, met with the Committee.

The most important topic for consideration was the question of whether the Executive Committee should endorse S. 526 as it had been reported out of the Senate committee or should press for amendments which would bring it into closer agreement with the majority wishes of the scientists represented. Decision was left in the hands of the three officers who conferred during the next two days with a number of government representatives. On May 1, Chairman Day wrote Senators Taft and Smith and Representative Wolverton, giving the Committee's endorsement of S. 526 and recommending two amendments: decreasing the size of the Foundation from 24 members to 9, and providing for Presidential appointment of the Director after consultation with the Foundation.

This date, May 1, marked a turning point in the efforts of the Executive Committee. Since February 23 it had been working under the dual mandate of trying to get a National Science Foundation and of trying to get a National Science Foundation that would include the specific features considered desirable by most scientists. Up

until May 1 the Executive Committee kept both objectives in mind and sought on every occasion to secure consideration of amendments to S. 526 which would bring it into better agreement with the majority judgment of scientists. The recommendations contained in the letter of May 1 were frankly compromises. After that date the Executive Committee made no further efforts to secure amendments, but simply endorsed the idea of a Foundation and endorsed the bills passed by Congress.

The recommendation of May 1 that the President appoint the Director was adopted by the Senate. On May 13, Senator Smith replied:

I have also conferred with the President on this matter and I am working out with Mr. Webb, Director of the Budget, a formula which takes care of this matter and which is in line with your suggestion. I hope that this formula will be approved at an early date so we can go ahead with the Bill.

In Senate debate on May 20, Senator Smith reported that this suggestion had been discussed in a conference with Mr. Webb and Dr. Bush and that later he, Senator Saltonstall, and Mr. Webb had discussed it with President Truman.

On May 14 to 20 the Senate debated S. 526. Debate was led by Senator Smith for the Republican party and Senator Kilgore for the Democratic party. Two important amendments resulted from the debate. Provision similar to that previously included in S. 525 for distribution of part of the funds on a geographical basis was adopted after long debate by a vote of 42 to 40. The compromise allowing the President to appoint the Director, which was proposed in Chairman Day's letter of May 1, was introduced as an amendment by Senators Magnuson and Fulbright. It was supported by Senators Smith and Saltonstall. All four stated that this amendment was frankly a compromise, that individually they did not all like it but that it would probably be acceptable to the President, and that it was probably the only compromise that would be generally acceptable and would make establishment of the Foundation possible. Senator Taft vigorously opposed the amendment. On a roll-call vote it carried by a single vote. S. 526, as amended, then passed by a majority of 79 to 8.

On the following day Senator Smith introduced a motion to reconsider the vote but later withdrew that motion. Senator Taft was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying that he intended to recommend to the leaders of the House that the amendment granting the President power to appoint the Director be removed when the bill came up for House of Representatives consideration.

For the next six weeks it seemed that the House of Representatives Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, which then had the bill, might not report it out in time for action before Congress adjourned in July. On July 7, Representative Wolverton, chairman of the Committee, introduced H. R. 4102, a bill substan-

tially like the original S. 526. It was referred to Mr. Wolverton's committee, which reported it out favorably on July 10. The administrative plan described in H.R. 4102 consisted of a Foundation of 24 members who would elect an executive committee of 9 members which would select the Director of the Foundation. No provision was made for geographical distribution of funds. Both of the significant amendments which had been made in the Senate were therefore missing from the House bill. This bill passed the House of Representatives by a voice vote on July 15.

S. 526, as passed by the Senate, and H.R. 4102, as passed by the House, were then sent to a joint Senate-House of Representatives conference to resolve the differences, of which the two major ones were the type of administration and the question of geographical distribution of a portion of the funds. On both issues the resolution was in favor of the House bill. Both houses passed the compromise measure and thus sent to the President a bill which differed only in minor ways from S. 526 as it had been reported out by the Senate committee on March 20.

The Executive Committee sent President Truman a long telegram urging him to sign the bill. Prof. Shapley was particularly active in this effort and arranged for telegrams to the President from a number of sources recommending his approval. Decision by the Executive Committee to urge this action was taken with some reluctance. Ever since the beginning we had been attempting to secure changes in the bill to make it agree more closely with scientists' wishes. The primary objective of the Inter-Society Committee was to secure a National Science Foundation. The bill on the President's desk was the only possibility. Urging him to sign it was, we felt, necessary to comply with the mandate of the Inter-Society Committee.

The President withheld his approval of the bill. *Science* has already published his reasons for the pocket veto (September 12, p. 237). The insistence by the Congress upon a type of administration which the President and his advisers did not consider workable killed the Science Foundation for 1947.

The Inter-Society Committee failed to accomplish its purpose of having a National Science Foundation created. If there are degrees of failure, it failed even more completely in securing a Foundation with the features which most scientists consider desirable. Why did it fail?

One reason may be that the Executive Committee never engaged in any of the behavior ordinarily called political. It obtained and it presented the majority judgment of the members of the Inter-Society Committee. It laid all its cards on the table from the very beginning by reporting not only majority judgments but also the extent of the majority and the fact that members of the Inter-Society Committee were willing to compromise. That is not a strong bargaining position, but the Execu-

tive Committee never attempted to bargain. Perhaps the honest objectivity of its reports and recommendations was politically naive and tactically bad.

A second reason may lie in an early decision both by the Inter-Society Committee as a whole and by the Executive Committee that they wanted very much to avoid the kind of situation which arose in the 79th Congress. A Senate majority and a majority of scientists had then agreed on S. 1850. Dissenting groups of scientists had agreed to support that bill. A few men prevented its passage by introducing a rival bill and withdrawing their support from S. 1850. In 1947 the picture differed. What had been a minority amendment became a majority bill. The Executive Committee felt that it might have killed that bill by starting a fight. Its real desire for peace may have inhibited stronger action in support of amendments to S. 526.

A third reason may lie in the great weight attached to the advice of a few very prominent scientists. The Congressmen most directly responsible for science legislation appeared to attach much less importance to the views of a two-thirds majority of scientists than they did to those of a few particularly prominent ones. The prestige of

a few names was used to support S. 526 and to rebuff any suggestions for change in that bill.

The 80th Congress will reconvene in January. The effort to secure a National Science Foundation should be renewed then. There is now almost unanimous agreement on the necessity of a National Science Foundation. The Senate has twice and the House of Representatives once passed such a bill. The President has repeatedly endorsed it. The Steelman Committee report carries strong arguments in its favor. The great majority of scientists, individually and through their associations, have spoken in its favor. This unanimity of support should be remembered in planning for 1948. The argument is no longer whether we should have a Foundation or not. It is one of what kind of Foundation we should have. It is agreement on the specific features of a Foundation that is now necessary. If scientists are willing and able, without important dissenting individuals or groups, to work for the early enactment of the kind of bill which the majority of scientists consider best, if they are willing to work individually by presenting their case to their own Congressmen, a generally satisfactory National Science Foundation law in 1948 is a strong possibility.

**The Inter-Society Committee for a National Science Foundation will meet in the Louis XVI Room of the Sherman Hotel in Chicago at 10:00 A.M. Sunday, December 28.**

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## Obituary

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### **Lorande Loss Woodruff** 1879-1947

Lorande Loss Woodruff, Colgate professor of protozoology at Yale University and director of the Osborn Zoological Laboratory, died at his home in New Haven after a long illness on June 23, 1947, in his 68th year. With his passing the Corporation of the Marine Biological Laboratory loses a member of more than 40 years standing and the Board of Trustees one who had served faithfully for 24 years.

Woodruff was born in New York on July 14, 1879, and received his education in his native city, graduating from Columbia University with the A.B. degree in 1901 and the Ph.D. in 1905. Before completing his graduate work he was appointed assistant and later instructor in biology at Williams College, where he remained until he was called to Yale in 1907. There he served successively as instructor, assistant professor, and professor until his death. He became chairman of the Department and director of the Osborn Zoological Laboratory in 1938, but took

leave of absence in November 1946 on account of ill health.

His connection with the Marine Biological Laboratory began in 1905, when he attended the summer session as investigator and instructor in the invertebrate course and was elected to membership in the Corporation. Four years later he joined the staff of the course in embryology, of which he remained a member until 1914. During the absence of Dr. Calkins in the summer of 1927 he was in charge of the course in protozoology. Elected to the Board of Trustees in 1923, he served with them until his death, and during the years 1930-32 he was a member of the Executive Committee.

Coming to Yale at a time when a radical reorganization of the instruction in biology was to be undertaken, Woodruff took part from the first in teaching general biology and in 1910 assumed full charge of the general course in Yale College. This he built up into one of the soundest and, at the same time, most popular courses in the University. Through the years thousands of students listened to his masterly lectures, later incorporated in his