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## No Opposition, No Support

The right to make grants in support of scientific research at universities and other nonprofit institutions is limited to a few Government agencies: the National Science Foundation, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Department of Agriculture. Others, among them the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Defense, and the National Bureau of Standards, may make contracts but not grants. The difference between a grant and a contract is important. In a contract, for example, the aims of the research program must be spelled out in detail, something that is incompatible with the exploration of the unknown; in a grant, only the general area of research needs to be specified. In a contract, detailed accounts of expenditures must be made to the granting agency; in a grant, the recipient institution looks after the accounting. In a contract, the equipment purchased for the project generally remains the property of the Government; in a grant, the equipment may, at the discretion of the granting agency, become the property of the recipient.

The question of what to do with research equipment after the program has been completed is a special source of difficulty under the contract arrangement. The equipment to be disposed of may range from portable things like glassware to permanent installations like nuclear reactors or linear accelerators. The procedure by which the Government divests itself of ownership of either portable or fixed equipment under contract arrangements is cumbersome and expensive. Portable equipment may be sent to a warehouse while lists describing it are circulated throughout the Government. If no federal agency wants the equipment, it may be declared surplus and put up for sale. The handling and accounting often costs more than the material is worth. Even for permanent installations, the problem is complicated by legal requirements. Generally the Government works out arrangements whereby the research institution may acquire ownership, but here again much paperwork and expense is entailed. Under grants, on the contrary, the granting agency may choose to make all equipment purchased for the project the property of the recipient institution from the outset.

Companion bills that extend the right to make grants to those agencies now limited to making contracts for basic research are now in committees of the House and the Senate. All of the agencies, both those that now make grants and those that do not, favor the bills, and there is apparently no opposition to their passage in Congress. On the contrary, it appears that there is general agreement that the bills would benefit universities, improve relations between the agencies and the universities, and simplify the administration of research—and all of this at no increase in costs.

Despite this agreement, these bills may be tossed aside during the rush toward adjournment unless they get some public support. This is especially likely to happen to the bill in the House, which is entitled "H.R. 13091, a bill to authorize the expenditure of funds through grants for the support of scientific research and other purposes." Those who favor the bill should express their support by writing to Representative Oren Harris, who introduced it in the House and who is chairman of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, to which it was referred. For a greater effect, a copy of this letter should also be sent to district representatives. Such support might tip the balance in favor of a good, sensible, but not very exciting piece of legislation.—G.DuS.

