News of Science

Health for Peace Act Passes Senate

The "Health for Peace Act," Senate Joint Resolution 41, introduced in the Senate by Senator Lister Hill (D-Ala.) in February, was passed on 20 May by a vote of 63 to 17. The bill, which had 63 sponsors, provides for the establishment of a National Institute for International Medical Research within the National Institutes of Health and of an accompanying 18-member National Advisory Council. The members of the council will be leaders in medical and health research and public affairs generally. With the Surgeon General as chairman, and with a few additional government representatives to assure interagency coordination, the council will help guide policy, make recommendations, pass on grants and loans, and report periodically to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to the President, and to Congress. The bill also authorizes the appropriation for the program of $50 million annually to be spent under the supervision of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, chiefly through the U.S. Public Health Service.

Activities Authorized

Some of the purposes of Senate Joint Resolution 41 are as follows.

1) To encourage and support the planning of essential research into disease, disease prevention, and the impairments of man, on a worldwide basis.

2) To encourage and support, in part through direct financial grants and loans of equipment, specific research projects on diseases and physical disability that are being conducted in institutions abroad.

3) To encourage and support the coordination of medical experiments and programs of research in the United States with complementary programs abroad.

4 To encourage and support the training of specialized research personnel through various means, including the establishment of research fellowships within the National Institutes of Health and elsewhere, both in the United States and abroad.

5) To encourage the improvement of research facilities abroad.

6) To encourage and support the rapid international interchange of knowledge about disease and disability, including the holding of international conferences and arrangements for translation and distribution services.

7) To cooperate with the research activities of the World Health Organization, the Pan-American Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other international organizations.

Although the principal governmental machinery proposed would be in the National Institutes of Health, there is provision, too, for the use of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and of the Children's Bureau in carrying out pertinent portions of the program.

Purposes Defined

When he introduced the bill, Senator Hill emphasized that its aim was humanitarian and that there were no political implications except that it would serve as a major instrument for world peace. He referred to an amendment to the Mutual Security Act that was passed last year which stated that it is the "policy of the United States to continue and to strengthen mutual efforts among the nations for research against diseases such as heart disease and cancer. In furtherance of this policy, the Congress invites the World Health Organization to initiate studies looking toward the strengthening of research and related programs against those and other diseases common to mankind or unique to individual regions of the globe." Hill pointed out that the purpose of his bill was to implement this policy by authorizing the establishment of governmental machinery for the "effective mobilization of our own research facilities and resources and authorizing also a series of programs which will translate the declaration of a policy and a purpose into concrete action." Hill also observed that if the Congress passes his measure, "notice will be served to all nations and all peoples that the U.S. Government desires that a new and substantial emphasis be given to world cooperation. . . ."

Representative John E. Fogarty (D-R.I.) sponsor of the companion bill in the House, House Joint Resolution 370, made another important point when, in introducing the measure on 6 May, he said: "This is not an aid program. It is not a welfare program. It is not comparable to commendable programs of this nature by which the United States assists others to improve their economic defense or welfare status. Thus the proposed new research program is one which exploits scientific potential alone." Repeatedly during the senate committee hearings it was stressed that the programs under the bill should not become obscured and confused by international politics and should be carried out on a scientist-to-scientist basis rather than as government-to-government negotiation.

Wide Public Support

The bill has had widespread support from the press and the public, and in May the National Conference on World Health, held in Washington under the auspices of the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization, devoted a major panel session to discussion of the measure. The session, "World Health for World Peace," was chaired by Howard A. Rusk, director of the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the New York University–Bellevue Medical Center. Panelists John T. Connor (president of Merck and Company, Inc.) and John J. Powers, Jr. (president of Pfizer International, Inc.) reported that their companies—and, in fact, the pharmaceutical industry as a whole—favored passage of the bill. However, both men expressed the hope that the traditional pattern of division of responsibility between governmentally supported research and research and development conducted by private industry would continue to be observed. To this, panelist Thomas Parran, former Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and now president of the Avalon Foundation, replied that there has been no major conflict on this point in connection with the operation of the National Institutes of Health.

The nine panelists agreed unanimously on the need for increased federal support in all fields of international health, but they emphasized that this should not be at the expense of privately sponsored programs. Representative Walter H. Judd (D-Minn.), a physician and for 10 years a medical missionary in China, agreed that there was no substitute for personal, voluntary effort. Leo Cherne, executive director of the Research Institute of America and chairman of the International Rescue Committee, suggested that humanitarian intervention involving health services could often be more effective than military intervention in conflicts with the Soviet Union.

Senator Richard Neuberger (D-Ore.) reminded the audience that although the legislation had significant humanitarian

and diplomatic aspects, Americans should not lose sight of its "self-interest" aspects. After commenting that in his state, which ranks high "in the realm of literacy," his mail runs about ten-to-one against foreign aid, Neuberger urged his listeners to "convince your people that world health and our participation in it is in the interest of world peace. . . . I think we have to put flesh on the skeleton and to show that the people feel that they have an international stake in health. . . ." Then he emphasized that the new program might produce medical discoveries that would prevent death and extend the lives of many Americans. That the United States has no monopoly on scientific development—that major findings have often been made in unexpected parts of the world—was a recurring theme throughout the discussions.

Although most of the formal consideration of the "Health for Peace Act," both governmental and nongovernmental, has emphasized its apolitical character, many of the editorials on the measure have mentioned that the Soviet Union is winning gratitude in many areas of the world by providing medical aid, while in this country such aid is largely in the discussion stage. House hearings on the act have not been scheduled at this writing. However, now that Representative Fogarty is back from the World Health Organization meeting in Geneva, perhaps prompt action can be expected.

NATO Progress in Science

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Science Committee and Office of the Science Adviser were established a year ago and are now in full operation. Recently Norman F. Ramsay, scientific adviser to the secretary general of NATO, reported on the Science Committee's activities for the first year of its existence. He pointed out that the committee has studied means for strengthening science among the NATO nations and has already taken action.

Fellowships and Summer Institutes

The largest and perhaps most obvious of its actions is the establishment of the NATO fellowship program. Ramsay observed that since the end of the war there has been a need for more freedom of movement for scientists, both within Europe and reciprocally between Europe and the United States. There has also been a shortage of well-trained scientists. The North Atlantic Council, at the recommendation of the Science Committee, has established about 250 science fellowships, each to be used in a country other than that in which the applicant lives. This number is expected to rise to about 400 next year.

It should be noted that the Department of State and the National Science Foundation have recently announced the award of the first group of 20 NATO postdoctoral fellowships to Americans. The grants will enable fellows to attend institutions in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Of the 20 awards, seven are for research in the life sciences and 13 are for research in the physical sciences. including mathematics and engineering. Each NATO fellow will receive a basic 12-month stipend of $4500. In addition, limited round-trip travel and dependency allowances will be provided.

Another of the NATO Science Committee activities described by Ramsay is the encouragement of institutes and summer schools for study of advanced or special scientific subjects. The organization has now established a fund for the partial support of such institutes. Largely as the result of NATO support, there will be six institutes next summer and even more in subsequent years.

Other Plans Being Considered

Ramsay also said that the pooling of scientific facilities and information for various collaborative programs is under discussion, particularly in deep-sea oceanography, space exploration, and materials research. He pointed out that oceanographic research ships, for example, are too expensive for most NATO nations to finance separately, but not collectively. Furthermore, he added, even when ships are sponsored by individual nations, coordinated studies are more meaningful than separate ones.

Ramsay also suggested that another means by which NATO science might be advanced on a cooperative basis would be through establishment of a comparatively small fund that would be available to provide quick assistance to joint scientific projects that are held up because of lack of money. He explained that a project is sometimes short of special equipment which can only be bought with foreign currency. Ramsay emphasized that a fund available without delay to those who need help is "many times more valuable, price for price, than money that is laborious and slow to administer." He expressed the hope that such a flexible, speedily administered fund could soon be made available.

Defense Science Slowed by Secrecy

He observed that defense science is of obvious importance but that cooperation is often slowed down by secrecy. However, Ramsay commented that during the past year there has been spectacular improvement in the exchange of classified defense research information. He said: "The launching of the Russian Sputnik showed both that the NATO nations could not afford such a waste of scientific effort and that the Russians had probably already discovered much of the information that the NATO nations were so zealously guarding from each other."

Ramsay's report closed with the following statement.

"The problem of science in the Atlantic Community remains a challenge. . . . Compared to the past, the scientific and technical cooperation now existing among the NATO nations is impressive. Yet compared to what is needed to be done, when we think of the swift advance of Russian research—even if Russia has yet to catch up with the West in most subjects—then our efforts are still too slow footed. The present is a beginning but the challenge still remains."

Kistiakowsky Succeeds Killian as Top Science Adviser

James R. Killian, Jr., President Eisenhower's top science adviser for the past year and a half, will leave government service next month. The former president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who is both the Presiden's Special Assistant for Science and Technology and the chairman of the new Federal Council for Science and Technology, will be succeeded, probably in both positions, by George Kistiakowsky, professor of chemistry at Harvard University. In his letter of resignation, Killian said that "compelling personal reasons" were the basis for his action. Replying to the letter, which was submitted 28 May, President Eisenhower said, "It would be impossible for me to overemphasize the importance of your work here. . . ."

Killian Had Major Role

One of the administration's responses after the first Soviet satellite launching in October of 1957 was the creation of a new post in the executive branch of the government. This position—Special Assistant for Science and Technology—was filled, with wide acclaim from the American scientific community, by Killian, who was then president of MIT. During the 18 months since his appointment, Killian, with the support of the Science Advisory Committee, has exerted a profound influence on the planning of this country's scientific efforts. Numerous reports, which, taken together, constitute a thorough review of the role of science in American society, have issued from the Killian committee. One of them, "Strengthening American Science," led to the establishment of the Federal Council for Science and Technology. Others have been concerned with the need for basic research, the role of