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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

Government Support of Research

The legislative process for support of science seems to function best when a spectacular package is involved. Although Congress has attempted to give every encouragement to science over the past decade, there has been particular emphasis on research in medicine, high-energy nuclear physics and, more recently, space. It is almost certain that funds for space research will increase sharply. This is an important frontier, but only one of many. There are negative features of these great spectacles. The President's request for \$98.8 billion is certain to come under attack, but appropriations for defense and space research are unlikely to suffer. Other areas are relatively more vulnerable, and some may receive less money during the next fiscal year. Formerly, when one segment of research was supported on a large scale, other areas also benefited. With research and development appropriations now taking an unprecedented proportion of the national budget, further expansion across the board may not come so easily as in the past.

Another negative feature arises from the fact that the number of competent investigators is limited. The great expansion in space research will in part be accomplished by recruiting workers away from other fields. Many areas of science which have promise of yielding important philosophical and practical results will suffer as talent is withdrawn.

Still another negative feature is a psychological one. Scientists, like other human beings, are affected by fads. They tend to go with the crowd. The research worker who does not go with the crowd encounters a rather bleak climate. He is likely to be regarded by administrators and laymen as an odd fellow who is not in tune with the times. Under this pressure, undue emphasis develops on glamorous areas.

Government policies are shaping academic research in this country, but who in government has as his primary responsibility the duty to give continuing serious thought to the effects—positive and negative—of excessive concentration on a few areas? Support for research should be balanced and should reflect needs and opportunities throughout science. One organization which could be helpful is only sporadically called on. The National Academy of Sciences is broadly representative of the sciences. Its members are drawn from all sections of the country. Unfortunately the Academy has recently had little influence in formulating broad policies with respect to science. The organization has been used principally as an agent to generate still more spectacles such as the International Geophysical Year. The National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council could serve a broader function, and the government would be well advised to avail itself of this source of wisdom and experience.—P.H.A.