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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.

More Paper Work, Less Research

Scientists in all fields should be concerned about a sequence of events during the past year which has adversely affected the grants program of the National Institutes of Health and could be repeated with other agencies. For many years NIH enjoyed a favored status. Congress was against cancer, heart disease, and other ailments and for curing them. The management of NIH has consistently been first class and through the mechanism of Study Sections the organization has effectively utilized the best judgment of the scientific community.

Policies with respect to grants were excellent and involved minimum paper work. The program was successful. It attracted the very best talent and led to many practical accomplishments. In addition, fundamental research was successfully fostered, and biology in this country is in the midst of its most flourishing epoch.

The program owed its success to the fact that NIH selected and supported the best investigators and then trusted them. Unfortunately a small minority of scientists betrayed that trust. These few rendered NIH vulnerable to attack by a committee of Congress.

The operations of NIH are monitored by the Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives. Congressman Fountain is Chairman. One of the activities of this committee is to hold hearings at which testimony is elicited from James A. Shannon and his staff. One of the crucial sets of hearings occurred on 28, 29, and 30 March 1962. The Subcommittee had uncovered a situation in which advantage had been taken of the NIH system.

This unfortunate slip was used by the Subcommittee to subject Shannon and his aides to an extremely unpleasant three days. One instance of mismanagement was given great emphasis, and the excellence of the overall NIH program was overlooked.

The hearings forced an acceleration in changes in NIH policies toward closer control of its grants. The paper work required for yearly continuations has been substantially increased. Grantees report that they must spend from 1 to 7 days in obtaining information and filling out the form. Since many senior investigators are involved, work on this form will cost the nation millions of dollars in time lost from research.

Moreover, grantees now must make a special justification to Washington whenever budgetary changes involving items costing over \$1000 are made. To handle this paper work more bureaucrats must be recruited. Previously the NIH program was staffed with knowledgeable scientists. The new posts can only be filled with administrative types who will not be able to handle scientific problems with confidence. They can only run scared, go by the book, and introduce all kinds of excuses for delay.

The changes will increase inefficiency and delays substantially. If no further demands are made on NIH this price might be justifiable. However, if further controls are required the nation's health research program could be severely handicapped. It is unfortunate that in order to chastise a few, regulations must be imposed which penalize the many, including some of this nation's most valuable and productive scientists.—P.H.A.