

# Letters

## Science Advisory Staffs for House and Senate

Recently a bill was introduced in Congress by Representative Abner Sibal to establish a Science Advisory Staff in the Senate and in the House of Representatives (HR 6866). The purpose of this staff would be to provide information to the members of the House and Senate who must vote on many issues requiring an evaluation of scientific and technical matters and their social, political, economic, and military implications, and to serve as a liaison between the Congress and the scientific community at large.

There are several reasons why this bill is important. Few members of Congress have had any training in science. It is very difficult and time-consuming for these men to educate themselves in science through reading, and thus few of them do so. Yet the impact of science on our culture as well as our lives is great, and representatives of the people should be informed about such matters as space, cancer, drugs, pesticides, and atomic energy, with all its implications for war and peace. Every year billions of our tax dollars are spent for research and development, with little evaluation or control of duplication. Currently, the executive branch has a near-monopoly of the scientific talent in government in the form of the scientific staffs of the various major departments and agencies. The legislative branch has to rely on these scientists, whose main task is to defend their own programs and seek the funds to support them. It appears that this lack of independent scientific advisory groups must be eliminated if the Congress is to be more than a mere rubber-stamp for the executive branch.

Therefore, I believe that the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as the individual scientists of this country, should take positive steps to insure the enactment of this bill into law. Hearings will be

held soon by the Subcommittee on Accounts of the Committee on House Administration (Representative Samuel N. Friedel, subcommittee chairman). It is important for this subcommittee to be aware that the bill has the backing of the professional scientific societies, as well as of the individual scientists concerned. Support HR 6866!

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## Channel 37

The correspondence columns of *Science* are perhaps not the best place in which to carry on a controversy about the possibility of reassigning the 608- to 614-megacycle band from television to radio astronomy. However, in your issue of 14 June [*Science* **140** 1174 (1963)], D. S. Greenberg writes, "it would not hurt if the nation's radio astronomers were to go out and fight for their cause. I am not aware that they are doing that." Perhaps other people, who do not have Greenberg's opportunities for finding out what is going on in Washington, also believe that the nation's radio astronomers have been idle. This is not the case.

Since 1960, when we at the University of Illinois initiated the proposal that channel 37 be reserved for radio astronomy, a continuous fight has been put up by American radio astronomers. This is particularly true since the formation by the National Academy of Sciences of its Sub-Committee on Radio Astronomy in 1961. The members of this subcommittee, as a body and also individually, have been instrumental in persuading the following organizations to petition the Federal Communications Commission to reserve Channel 37 for radio astronomy: National Academy of Sciences; American Astronomical Society; American Geophysical Union; National Radio Astronomy Observ-

atory; U.S. National Committee, International Scientific Radio Union; Federation of American Scientists; American Institute of Physics; National Science Foundation; National Center for Atmospheric Research; Stanford University; Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington; University of California, Berkeley; Boeing Scientific Research Laboratories; University of Michigan; University of Alaska (Dr. Leif Owren); Graduate Research Center of the Southwest; Owens Valley Observatory; Ohio State University; University of Maryland; Hayden Planetarium, New York; University of Illinois; Yale University; and Cornell University, Center for Radiophysics and Space Research.

Admittedly, the attitude of the public toward this question can be settled conclusively only by a plebiscite. Nevertheless, the actions of the American public's elected representatives give a clue to the trend of public opinion. The following list, which I cannot claim is exhaustive, gives the names of persons and of public bodies who have, in one way or another, and at the instance of radio astronomers, urged the FCC to reserve Channel 37 for radio astronomy: Senate of the State of Illinois; City Council of Danville, Illinois; County Board of Supervisors of Vermilion County, Illinois; the Governor of Utah; Senators Paul H. Douglas, Everett M. Dirksen, and Gordon Allott; and Representatives William L. Springer, Melvin Price, George P. Miller, Hastings Keith, Lawrence J. Burton, and Sherman P. Lloyd.

The FCC has not been indifferent to these approaches. Its attempt to solve the problem by proposing a "silent zone" of 600-mile radius around the University of Illinois' radio telescope may not have found favor with the country's radio astronomers. Yet the proposal showed a clear desire on the part of the FCC to help radio astronomy. I will also quote the words of Chairman Newton F. Minow published in an FCC document dated 27 May 1963 (FCC 63-490, 35714), who wrote: "In my view there is considerable merit in the contention that the national interest would be best served by the deletion of Channel 37 from the Table of Assignments, in order to make that part of the spectrum available for Radio Astronomy." In the same document Commissioner (now Chairman) E. William Henry writes: "I am likewise in agreement with Chairman Minow's assertion . . . that