News and Comment

Congress and Science: NSF Hearings Provide Some Illuminating Insights on the Deteriorating Relationship

What is souring the longstanding romance between Congress and science?

"Research" is still a golden word in American life, effective for selling detergents as well as for evoking political support. But, clearly, something has gone very wrong, at least on the congressional scene. And this has been reflected in many ways: in the leveling off of NIH's rate of growth; in the appointment of a select House committee to investigate federal support for research and development; in the skeptical attitudes that scientists increasingly encounter when they testify on Capitol Hill; and, last week, in the bludgeoning of the National Science Foundation (NSF) budget by the House.

Congress, of course, has not presented any bill of particulars to account for its shifting mood, but the closest thing to such a document came out last week when the House Appropriations Committee routinely released the volume of transcripts containing the budget hearings for NSF. (*Independent Offices Appropriations for 1964, Part 2*, available without charge from the House Appropriations Committee, Washington 25, D.C.)

The outcome of these hearings, which were held in traditionally closed session last February, was something unprecedented in NSF's 12-year history: The appropriation, for which an 83-percent increase was sought, was frozen at last year's level, and NSF was specifically directed to refrain from setting up new programs. The Senate, which tends to be more generous, is yet to have its say in the matter, and the final verdict is likely to be a bit less harsh. But the significant thing at this point is not dollar amounts but rather the mood that seems to be enveloping Congress as it faces proposals involving scientific programs.

The Congress is clearly peeved by the mounting costs of research, by its own inability to grasp the substance of scientific matters, by the conflicting counsel that it receives when it seeks advice in the scientific community, and, finally, by imbalances in the geographical distribution of research funds.

It can be argued that in some of these categories, such as cost and the difficulty of comprehension, Congress can only realistically blame the real world and itself; after all, research is costly and Congress has done virtually nothing to equip itself for understanding the issues involved. But, once this is acknowledged, it does not change the fact that the Congress is indeed feeling querulous—for good and bad reasons—and that it is no longer disposed to continue its postwar practice of bestowing a blank check upon research.

NSF Hearings

Some of the reasons for this shift in sentiment present themselves quite vividly in the colloquies that took place during the NSF hearings, when Alan T. Waterman, who has since retired as NSF director, presented the Foundation's budgetary proposals to the Independent Offices Appropriations Subcommittee. Before Waterman was able to get through three paragraphs of his prepared statement, he was interrupted by Albert Thomas, the Texas Democrat who chairs the subcommittee. "Where is Dr. DuBridge?" Thomas inquired, referring to Lee A. DuBridge, president of the California Institute of Technology, who was not among the members of the National Science Board who accompanied Waterman to the hearing.

Waterman explained that DuBridge was unable to attend. "He [DuBridge] had about $30 million in 1962," Thomas stated. "No telling what it will be in 1964. You can tell the doctor to go to other fields. He has already conquered this one." And then Thomas went on to offer the observation, "I do not think any particular state has a monopoly on intelligence. With federal dollars it can be drawn there, yes. You can draw it from other parts of the country," he added, alluding to the argument that California deserves the federal support it receives because it has the facilities and manpower to meet the government's requirements.

Waterman proceeded, turning next to proposals for NSF to expand its fellowship program in line with an administration effort to increase sharply graduate enrollments in engineering, mathematics, and the physical sciences. The fellowship proposal, which came out of a study conducted by the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC), instantly drew Thomas's fire, not on the substance but, rather, on the involvement of Jerome B. Wiesner, the President's Science Adviser.

Wiesner's "Fine Hand"

"I thought I saw his [Wiesner's] fine hand in at least two important aspects of this budget," Thomas stated, in the first of a series of fairly hostile references to Wiesner. For example, in referring to NSF's Science Information Program, Thomas inquired of Waterman, "Is my friend Dr. Wiesner in this program, too? . . . How many programs has the doctor taken over?" And, finally, "Dr. Wiesner has not done badly." All of which indicates that Albert Thomas, who occupies one of the most powerful positions in Congress for allocating funds for research, has discovered Jerome Wiesner, who occupies one of the most powerful positions for this purpose in the executive branch. And, from Thomas's remarks and other evidence, it appears that some of the agencies that are not too pleased with Wiesner's efforts to rationalize the federal research establishment have found their way to Thomas and elicited a sympathetic response. (Whatever the case may be, Thomas not only indicated acute interest in Wiesner's operations, but also struck hard at Wiesner's own budget, which also comes under the Texan's jurisdiction. For the coming fiscal year, Wiesner sought $1,025,000, compared with the $764,150 appropriated for his Office of Science and Technology this year. The verdict from Thomas's committee was $780,000, an increase not even sufficient for absorbing the forthcoming federal pay increase.)

Thomas was not alone in carping at the NSF presentation. One of his Demo-

cratic colleagues, Edward P. Boland of Massachusetts, told Waterman that "there is a constant complaint heard, not only on the Hill but in areas back home, that we actually shovel out money to the National Institutes of Health, and that they have a difficult job in trying to allocate it. The result is that there is a lot of slipshod allocation of funds."

Waterman and his associates said they felt that this was not the case, and proceeded to offer the PSAC fellowship study and proposals as a justification for expanding NSF's programs. The PSAC study, which calls for turning out 7500 Ph.D.'s annually by 1970, launched Thomas onto a fairly bewildering dissertation: "There is about a $90 billion budget per year," he stated. "What is it dependent upon? You spoke of California. California's great growth has been out of the federal treasury. No one knows that more than you do. The federal treasury is there in more than half a dozen different forms. This [the NSF budget] is just the chicken feed part of the support which California has. What do you base that 7500 students on. . . . What is the value to the national economy of a Ph.D. in math and science? No one has ever come up with that figure. No one has ever made any research. We talk about plowing it back into the economy. . . . What is the worth of a Ph.D.? Our friend, Dr. [Lloyd] Berkner, came up with a figure off the top of his hat over in my office when I asked him that question. I do not remember what it was," Thomas stated, "but the doctor always has a good quick answer." And the congressman went on to observe, "Let us stop stalling around in the dark. The more we spend for national defense, the more Cal Tech gets."

This brought Representative Joe L. Evins, Democrat of Tennessee, into the discussions; he told the assemblage, "This is not said with any enmity, but with great respect, that the scientist does not know the value of a dollar."

An effort to explain the value of a Ph.D. was made by Detlev Bronk, president of the Rockefeller Institute, who attended the hearing as a member of the National Science Board. Bronk related that during World War II, when high-altitude bombing was being developed, he headed a team of Ph.D.'s that developed the oxygen masks and life support systems for flying at 25,000 feet. Bronk explained that neither he nor his associates had anticipated working on this particular problem when they received their training. "As a member of the National Science Board," he continued, "all I can do is make my country the best prepared country to deal with the problems which may arise, but we certainly cannot foresee what the problems will be 10 years from now."

Evins responded to this presentation by offering a reminder that research is supported by many federal agencies and that "all of the great modern scientific achievements have not been brought about by the National Science Foundation."

Research Titles

The appropriations hearing also lapsed into one of Congress's favorite pastimes when it is feeling unhappy about research: ridiculing project titles. In this case the job was undertaken by Representative Charles R. Jonas, Republican of North Carolina, who said at the outset that he's as much for research as the next fellow (things have not yet reached the point where members state that some of their best friends are scientists). "I do not want to engage too much in nit picking," he said, "but I fail to see how, with the need as great as you say it is to develop scientists, you can justify paying a man $20,000 to spend two years studying the cultural evolution in peasant communities. That is a very nice field for somebody to go into, but I doubt if it contributes greatly to our store of scientific knowledge."

An answer was attempted by Henry W. Riecken, Jr., NSF's assistant director for social sciences, but before he got very far, Jonas interrupted. "I will tell you my favorite story if you will permit me to. A boy came home from school one day and asked his father to help him write a theme to prove that the white man was smarter than the Indian. The father thought a minute and said, 'Son, back in the days of the Indians there were no taxes, there was no national debt, there was plenty of hunting and fishing and the women did all the work.' Then he added," Jonas said, " 'I do not believe I can help you prove the white man is smarter than the Indian.' "

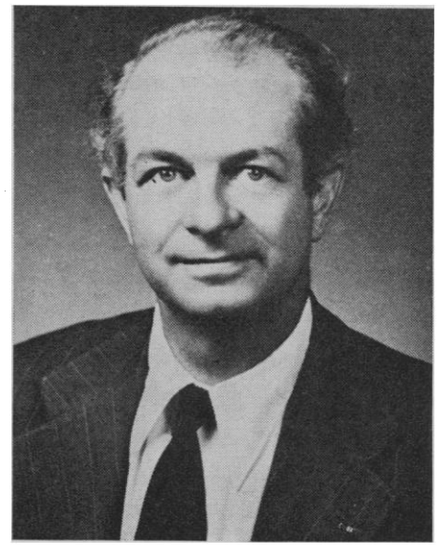
Riecken then explained that "the problems of introducing technological change into the less-developed countries are very closely related to changes in cultures and societies over time." Jonas didn't seem too convinced, for after the matter was bandied around a bit he was still asking, "You think in view of the condition of the country, its finances, etc., that we can well afford $20,000 of the taxpayer's money to make a comparative study of village life?"

The hearings rambled on to a broad range of other matters, and at one point Boland wanted to know why, if NSF is so important, it wasn't set up earlier. "Why did not the scientific community, long before 12 years ago, recognize the fact that this was something that should have been done?" he demanded. Representative Harold C. Ostertag (R–N.Y.) took little part in the inquiry but did manage to say,

Linus C. Pauling, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1954, was named last week to receive the 1962 Nobel Peace Prize.

Pauling, who is on the faculty of California Institute of Technology, has been a vehement opponent of nuclear testing and is generally credited with having aroused public opinion over the health hazards of radioactive fallout. In 1958 he brought suit against the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department to stop testing. Last year, he picketed the White House to protest fallout, and that same evening attended a presidential dinner honoring Nobel Prize winners.

The peace prize, which is awarded by a five-member committee of the Norwegian parliament, will be presented 10 December in Oslo.



Linus Pauling

"I would not want my statement or inquiry to reflect the thinking that I am not a believer or do not recognize the importance of this program and of all our research programs, but one of the disturbing aspects of science and our so-called research, which in a sense is science, is that we seem to be having it coming out of our ears."

The product of this inquiry was a committee report holding NSF to its previous budget of $323 million. Ambitious plans for supporting the developing of "centers of excellence" were specifically barred; the fellowship expansion was ruled out, and the committee recommended that NSF be barred from transferring any of its funds to other agencies. This apparently was another slap at Wiesner, whom the committee suspects of end running Congress by allocating NSF funds to other agencies. The Senate will soon have its say, but, in any case, Congress and science don't appear to be in very good shape. Significantly, when the Thomas' committee recommendations came to the floor, as part of a huge spending bill covering scores of federal agencies, not one of the 435 members rose to say anything in behalf of NSF.—D. S. GREENBERG

Foundations: Patman Plugs Away At Theme that Growth, Operations of Tax Exempts Call For Scrutiny

The leading congressional critic of tax policy on nonprofit foundations called the matter to public attention again recently when he complained that he found too many friends of foundations on a Treasury panel looking into the question of foundations and the taxes they do not pay.

Representative Wright Patman (D–Tex.), who takes an anti-trustful view of the activities of tax-exempt foundations, was referring to a task force formed by the Treasury following publication in December of the congressional committee print *Tax-Exempt Foundations and Charitable Trusts: Their Impact On Our Economy*.

The report carried the subtitle "Chairman's Report to the Select Committee on Small Business." Patman was then chairman of the committee, and the report bears, as the subtitle implies, a strong personal touch.

A second and bigger installment of information on the foundations is soon to appear and is likely to prompt a round of discussion of foundation management and financial operations, as did the first Patman report last winter.

Statistical heart of the first report was a staff analysis of the assets, liabilities, net worth, and so forth, of some 534 foundations, including most of the richest and best known. It should be noted that no hearings have yet been held and the foundations, therefore, have not had an opportunity to answer the charges stated and implied in the report.

The avowed objective of the study was to "determine whether legislation is needed in order to provide effective supervisory controls over tax-exempt foundations and protect the public." The tone of the report is sharply critical, and in it Patman repeats a drastic recommendation he made in the House a year ago—that there be an immediate moratorium on the granting of tax-exempt status to foundations.

His reasons for recommending a moratorium were, in short form, as follows.

"1. Laxness and irresponsibility on the part of the Internal Revenue Service.

"2. Violations of law and Treasury regulations by far too many of the foundations encompassed in [the] study.

"3. The withdrawal of almost $7 billion from the reach of tax collectors for taxable years 1951 through 1960. This amount represents the total receipts of only 534 out of an estimated 45,124 tax-exempt foundations.

"4. The rapidly increasing economic power in foundations which—in [Patman's] view—is far more dangerous than anything which has happened in the past in the way of the concentration of economic power.

"5. Foundation controlled enterprises possess the money and the competitive advantages to eliminate the small businessman."

Despite this wide-ranging indictment, no severe shock waves from resentment against foundations are detectable in Congress as a whole, and it appears that no drastic changes in laws governing foundations are imminent. What is significant, however, is the Texan's being on the trail of the foundations, for Patman, as one seasoned observer of the congressional scene puts it, is "relentless."

Like Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*, Patman has a reputation as an investigator who never gives up. And as fifth-ranked Democrat in seniority in the House and a very hard worker, he has collected a clutch of committee portfolios which make him an effective operative.

First, Patman, who was elected to the House in 1928, is chairman of the House Banking and Currency Committee. His investigation of foundations, however, was undertaken when he was chairman of the House Select Committee on Small Business. He gave up that chairmanship at the start of the current session of Congress when he succeeded to the chairmanship of Banking and Currency, but he retained his chairmanship of the Small Business subcommittee on foundations. Foundations fall under the jurisdiction of this subcommittee because of their putative impact on small business.

For good measure, the 70-year-old Patman is listed as vice-chairman of the Joint Committee on Defense Production and chairman of two subcommittees of the Joint Economic Committee.

Despite his seniority and authority, Patman lacks the ultimate influence of a few men, such as Wilbur Mills (D–Ark.), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and Albert Thomas (D–Tex.), chairman of two pivotal Appropriations subcommittees, whose pronouncements on their own subjects have the effect of instant persuasion because they lead the House and express its will at the same time. For Patman is known as a crusader, as something of a Populist out to beard the mighty, with views—on the interest rate, for example—which the House often does not share.

Patman, however, is regarded in the House as well informed and a doughty investigator. And if he can produce convincing evidence to support his criticism of foundations, the Members are likely to line up behind him.

To date, the evidence of record is contained in the 135 quarto-sized pages of the Patman report, published on the last day of 1962. How much attention it attracted is indicated by the rapid exhaustion of the 5500 copies printed. Both the Government Printing Office, which sold the report at 65 cents a copy, and the committee were soon out of the reports, and a steady demand for them has had to go unmet. The projected new report is expected to obviate the need for a second printing.