News and Comment

New Administration: Indications Are It Will Bring Few Changes for Scientific, Academic Worlds

Two points stand out in any effort to foretell the effects that the Johnson Administration may have on the nation's scientific and academic communities: (i) in words and in actions, the new President is closely identified with his predecessor's interest in promoting research and education; and (ii) the political and budgetary problems that so often frustrated Kennedy in these and other areas are still there—as potent as ever—to confront any Johnson effort to put over a Kennedy-type program.

Congress, which recently dismembered the National Science Foundation budget, is not likely to reconsider because of 22 November's awful happening; nor will it suddenly acquire new perceptions on the role of the federal government in elementary and secondary education. Therefore, the most likely result of the Johnson succession is that programs that are in motion will remain in motion, and that efforts to get new programs under way, or to enlarge old ones, will run into the same barriers that all along afflicted Kennedy's New Frontier aspirations.

It is widely thought that one exception will be the space program, a long-standing Johnson interest—starting in the Senate and continuing when, as Vice President, he headed the National Space Council—but the reality of this expectation is yet to be tested. In Johnson's address to Congress last week, "the dream of conquering the vastness of space" came first in a recitation of national goals. And while others meditated about possible memorials to the late President, the space agency, with Johnson's approval, turned Cape Canaveral into Cape Kennedy in a matter of hours. Thus, there is substance to the feeling that Johnson is deeply interested in space, and that the program may receive more personal attention. As a consequence, out of respect to the new chief executive, Congress may back down from its burgeoning distrust of the vast space budget, but it wasn't for lack of trying that Kennedy failed to communicate to Congress his own enthusiasm for the NASA program and his own conception of its pace and scope. And, if Congress should give back part of the $600 million that it cut from the NASA budget request, it will be a gesture of good will and not a sign of conversion. Such gestures are traditionally accorded a new President; for example, Congress, against its better judgment, responded with scarcely a dissent to Kennedy's urgent request for a vastly expanded civil defense program, but when he came around the next year for another appropriation, it was apparent that the honeymoon had ended and Congress didn't want to talk about civil defense.

As far as the research and development budget is concerned, the most important political fact is that it is getting to be awfully big, and that any chief executive who is inclined toward an expanded federal role in this area would inevitably run hard into the money problem. With the budget for the coming fiscal year about to be sent to the printers, virtually every federal agency is bemoaning the pressures to keep down expenditures. Such pressures are regularly applied throughout the budgetary process, but this year—with the R&D budget in the neighborhood of $17 billion and Congress getting itchy about R&D costs—the pressures are said to be extraordinary.

It is significant that, despite the congressional rumbling and the political need to keep the budget down when a tax cut was being sought, Kennedy was willing—probably eager—to go along with his advisers' proposals for an 83-percent increase in the NSF budget and a variety of ambitious proposals for federal aid to education. Congress, of course, didn't share his enthusiasm, but the intent was there, and slowly, through various devices, Kennedy managed to pump a great deal of money into the nation's universities under one heading or another. Whether Johnson will share this interest is the subject of a great deal of speculation in the federal agencies concerned with education and research. On the one hand, Johnson is regarded as a sort of legislative Toscanini, a leader who can extract harmonies that Congress didn't even know it could produce; on the other hand, the committee chairmen who tied knots around Kennedy's program are still there on Capitol Hill, and if Johnson is shrewder than all of them put together, they are still shrewd enough to carry on their tradition of stopping things, a role that is favored by the congressional lay of the land.

In this connection, one of Kennedy's most remarkable qualities was his ability—in the face of congressional opposition—to seek out every possible crevice for getting more federal money into the universities. In many cases, Congress caught on after a time—as it did recently when it called for curbs on NASA's growing support for predoctoral studies, but the point is that Kennedy was committed to getting the money in there one way or another, and if Congress closed the doors, he had his advisers test the windows. From his voting record and everything he has said and done, it is plain that Johnson shares Kennedy's belief in the government's responsibility for cultivating mindpower, but whether he will be as passionate and inventive is another matter.

The death of the President has cast some uncertainty on whether Jerome B. Wiesner, the White House science adviser, will be resigning from office, as previously scheduled. Last month it was announced that Wiesner would be leaving in February to return to M.I.T., where he had been designated to succeed George Harrison as dean of science, upon Harrison's retirement. During Johnson's first week in the White House Wiesner is known to have had a number of sessions with him, and the question of his departure is understood to have been discussed. Just what was determined has not been disclosed, but it is generally felt that if Johnson wants him to stay, Wiesner will put aside personal considerations and comply. During their service with the administration, Johnson and Wiesner had no occasion to work closely together, but the new President seems to be making a strenuous effort to hold the Kennedy team together and to carry on the New Frontier without missing a beat, and if he asks Wiesner to

stay on, he will be following a pattern that he has extended throughout the executive branch. A widespread expectation, reflected in this column last week, was that the Kennedy braintrust would dissolve rather quickly, but it now appears that Johnson was engaging in more than a matter of form when he asked Kennedy's appointees to stay at their posts. With nearly 3 years' experience behind them, they have turned into a tried and smooth-running team that can be immensely useful to the new White House incumbent; furthermore, many of them are from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and their presence in the administration won't hurt Johnson's efforts to win the support of the northeast urban majorities that helped put Kennedy in office.

With "let us continue" as his theme, Johnson on Monday carried through Kennedy's plan to present the annual Fermi award to J. Robert Oppenheimer, the nuclear physicist who had once been declared a security risk by the Atomic Energy Commission. Several Republican members of the Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee were noticeably absent from the White House ceremony, including Senator Bourke E. Hickenlooper of Iowa, who said that he could not attend "in good conscience." Oppenheimer, in receiving the award, commented that "I think it just possible, Mr. President, that it has taken some charity and some courage for you to make this award today. That would seem to be a good augury for all our futures."

The most pressing scientific decision facing Johnson is that of whether a high-energy accelerator should be built in the Midwest (*Science*, 11 October). The accelerator is so wrapped in a tangle of technical, budgetary, and political considerations that it is generally felt the issue will be resolved on the President's desk. In preparation for that decision, the high-energy physics panel headed by Norman F. Ramsey, of Harvard, was reconvened several weeks ago to see whether it could come up with a clearcut verdict. In its initial statement on the Midwest machine, the panel was rather iffy, stating that it should be built if it did not interfere with larger machines planned for the East and West Coasts. The verdict from this session hasn't been made public, but it is said to bear the same qualifications that in the past proved so puzzling to the political and budgetary decision makers.—D. S. GREENBERG

U.S.–U.S.S.R. Relations: Way Cleared for Frequency Allocations, Pact on Legal Principles for Space

American-Soviet relations in recent months have been compounded of an odd mixture of the bitter and the better. The autobahn incidents and the Barghoorn affair exuded a familiar cold war chill, but, in contrast, the past few weeks have also produced some specific indicators of a warming trend. The United States and the Soviet Union ended a long impasse in the legal subcommittee of the United Nations' Outer Space Committee, enabling the U.N. to move toward approval of legal principles governing activities in space. The two countries were also key parties in a successful international effort to allocate radio frequencies in outer space. In the field of arms control, an American-Russian agreement led up to a U.N. resolution pledging member states to refrain from placing in orbit any objects carrying nuclear weapons.

A dissonant note in this duet in cooperation, however, was struck at the time of the announcement that Yale professor Frederick C. Barghoorn was picked up by Soviet police on unspecified charges. The United States immediately postponed sending a delegation to negotiate the extension of the U.S.–U.S.S.R. agreement on exchanges in scientific, technical, educational, cultural, and other fields.

Barghoorn's release apparently cleared the way for a rescheduling of negotiations, but at the end of last week State Department officials indicated only that a meeting would probably be held soon after the first of the year, and that no firm date has been set.

The long-term effects of the Barghoorn arrest, which seems to have genuinely aroused the academic community, are difficult to gauge. National Academy of Sciences officials, who handle exchanges of individual scientists conducted under the auspices of the American and Soviet academies, report no immediate evidence of repercussions. Applications for exchange berths next year are now in, and under consideration, and so far no American applicant has withdrawn.

The evidence seems to indicate that both governments see advantages in the exchanges, and chances are that the program will be extended. Whether it will be expanded remains to be seen. An American draft agreement sent to the Russians in October suggested that a new series of exchanges of delegations in fields such as oceanography, geodesy, seismology, meterology, and geography be added, but assessment of the Soviet reaction to this proposal will have to await the new round of negotiations.

In one specialty—nuclear sciences—there has been a notable quickening in exchange activity. While a special exchange program for nuclear scientists has been authorized since 1959 as a kind of annex to the regular exchange agreement, officials say there were no actual exchanges of scientists under the sub-agreement between 1960 and this year. Then, last May, Atomic Energy Commission chairman Glenn T. Seaborg led a delegation on a tour of some Soviet equivalents of our unclassified atomic energy facilities, a tour on which the American group apparently was shown around more freely than had been expected. While he was in Russia, Seaborg also signed a 2-year extension of the memorandum on cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy, which is in effect, an agreement between the AEC and the Soviet state atomic energy agency.

In recent weeks a Soviet group headed by Seaborg's opposite number, Andronik M. Petrosyants, chairman of the U.S.S.R. Committee on Utilization of Atomic Energy, has been making a reciprocal tour of installations in the United States.

More Nuclear Scientists

After the first of the year, two groups from each country are scheduled to be exchanged under the atomic energy agreement. While, in fact, Russian and American nuclear scientists have visited each others' countries under other sections of the exchange agreement during the past 3 years, the resumption of traffic under the memorandum covering nuclear science should increase the flow. This resumption seems to be ascribable both to the change in the political atmosphere and to the personalities of the two atomic energy agency chairmen.

While the partial test ban treaty is regarded by some as a kind of vernal equinox in American-Soviet relations, the agreement on legal principles for space between the two principal space powers appears more the product of 2 years of negotiation conducted in the quest for equal advantage, which passes in international affairs for the spirit of compromise.