

Research Administration: Study Urges Universities To Improve Methods

It is never safe to say that decisive power rests at any one place in the vast federal establishment. But it is safe to say that a great deal of power rests in the Bureau of the Budget. For it is written in the rule book that this staff appendage to the presidency has authority to supervise and control the administration of the federal budget—which means that the Bureau holds a good length of the federal purse strings. Consequently, anyone concerned with the financing and administration of academic science has an interest in a 141-page study, 3 years in the works, that was quietly issued this month under the Bureau's imprint.

Titled, "The Administration of Government Supported Research at Universities,"* the study ranges over a variety of problems. But its principal significance is that, with one major qualification, it emerges as decisively pro-science in addressing itself to the historic problems of reconciling the scientists' insistence upon independence and freedom with the government's insistence upon careful accountability for public funds. The qualification is that, when the academic and scientific communities develop the means for assuring prudent use of federal funds, government bookkeepers can reel up a lot of red tape and generally confine themselves to Washington. The study recognizes that many institutions have developed "reasonably sophisticated management systems," but it also suggests that "improvements are still needed," and that in the absence of improvements, still tighter federal controls may result.

For a long time, it was considered somewhat indecent even to acknowledge the possibility that the post-Sputnik gusher of federal funds for research had produced situations in which government grants were not always ap-

plied to the purposes for which they were intended. One of the great turning points in this attitude occurred in 1962 when Congressman L. H. Fountain (D-N.C.) severely criticized the National Institutes of Health for its manner of overseeing the use of extramural funds (*Science*, 7 June 1963). Fountain's conclusions stampeded NIH into issuing a grants manual that many scientists considered unduly restrictive. And this, in turn, inspired the National Academy of Sciences to make a study of the government-science relationship, culminating in a 1963 report titled, "Federal Support of Basic Research in Institutions of Higher Learning." In terms of the traditional ideology of the scientific community, the most significant feature of the Academy report was its diplomatic acknowledgment that the ethical practices of the scientific community were not altogether untarnished. Declared the Academy study: "We believe that the understanding of the purpose of the federal support of basic research by the project grant/contract system is not sufficiently widespread in the scientific community. Grants and contracts are given as trusts to institutions for a purpose, which is substantially as described by the principal investigator in his proposal. The investigator assumes a major responsibility in accepting federal funds and has an obligation to account for their proper use. Acceptance of a grant commits him to a conscientious effort to achieve its stated purpose; he acquires no other rights to the granted or contracted funds."

The Bureau of the Budget study leans heavily on the Academy report, but at many points it surpasses it in stressing the value of scientific freedom as against the political requirement of accountability for government funds. "There can be no question," the report states, "that recipients of public funds must spend those funds for the purposes for which they are made avail-

able; diversion of funds to other purposes negates the basis on which the competitive award was originally made. Yet it must continually be recalled that basic research is by nature unpredictable. The phenomena to be studied and the principal research purpose or objectives can be identified and the general approach and methodology can be described, but the results of the research can only be conjectured. Essentially," the report continues, "the funding agencies are betting on the scientific judgment of the investigators they support."

Applying this attitude to a typically thorny subject, that of grantees changing the direction or subject of their research in mid-course, the report states, "It is fully in the public interest for a university investigator to enjoy the maximum practicable freedom within the phenomenon under study to pursue new research objectives, or to discontinue those no longer promising, without jeopardizing" his support. "The effectiveness of his research output is likely to be enhanced if he has this freedom." With a bow toward the accountability requirement, it adds that the investigator should be required to notify the funding agency of such shifts, but that he should be free to continue with his new line of inquiry unless the agency decides that it is unwilling to support the modified project.

Throughout the Bureau's report there is emphasis on the desirability of shifting the details of scientific administration from Washington to the campus, and of providing the means for greater local flexibility in deciding what is to be researched and by whom. Specifically, the report recommends that when agencies are supporting science for the sake of science, rather than as a means toward attaining specified objectives, they employ a new legal instrument, to be known as a "research agreement," rather than the traditional research grant or contract. Whether this would involve more than a semantic difference is left rather fuzzy, with the recommendation that the details be worked out by the Bureau of the Budget, the Office of Science and Technology, and the granting agencies. But in view of the study's support for local control accompanied by more reliance on institutional, rather than project, grants, the "research agreement" concept is full of interesting implications. Among these is the suggestion that one relatively

* A limited number of copies are available, without charge, from the Bureau of the Budget, Executive Office of the President, Washington, D.C.

simple, blanket agreement might encompass all or much of the federally supported basic research at an institution, with campus authorities deciding on most administrative matters. The report simply states that "a single research instrument would permit the Government-university relationship to develop strictly in terms of requirements for getting the research done most effectively while guarding the essential interests of both parties." It adds that "agencies would write a covering agreement with the university specifying the general terms of the Government-university relationship, with specific tasks or projects spelled out within the terms of the overall agreement. The terms and conditions of the agreement, e.g., fiscal and technical reporting, handling of equipment, travel arrangements, etc., would be consistent with the unique requirements for the conduct of university research and have the simplicity and flexibility traditionally associated with the grant."

The Bureau report makes it clear that the burden is on the universities to demonstrate that they can develop mechanisms that will make it unnecessary for federal administrators to poke into campus affairs. But, as a step toward this goal, the Bureau also turns toward the policies and practices of the numerous granting agencies and decrees that they simplify and standardize their ways of doing business with the universities.

To focus responsibility and authority in federal support of research, the report states that agency program directors should be "pre-eminent on substantive matters involved in the conduct of research." This recommendation does not necessarily conflict with the desire to enlarge local control; rather, it suggests that when the local authorities find it necessary to turn to Washington, there should be no doubt about who has the authority to handle the matters concerning them. The report adds that, while differing missions require agencies to adopt administrative requirements that suit their own needs, "nevertheless, the case for considerable standardization is now a strong one. The complexities of the present system demand a persistent effort to bring individual agency practices under some common policies which are internally consistent . . . and which are coordinated on a Government-wide basis. This would result in the simplification

Better Campus Management Could Cut U.S. Controls

. . . [The] growth in [federal research] funds, together with agency and congressional concern over the effectiveness of research administration, have produced increasing Federal administrative restrictions, regulations, and controls on research grants and contracts.

In part, these controls have been imposed to correct deficiencies in agency administrative systems. But they also reflect some lack of confidence in the adequacy of university management and supervision of faculty members. Experience has led many universities to develop reasonably sophisticated management systems for their sponsored research activities. However, improvements are still needed. Universities should recognize more fully the importance of both the quality of their business management and the type of professional conduct of faculty members when the university accepts Federal funds. . . .

Tighter administrative controls in Federal research programs have imposed a substantial administrative burden upon the universities and have in some areas removed from the universities responsibilities for managing their own affairs and regulating the activities of their faculties. This trend to tighter controls could continue in the absence of recognizable improvements in university administration. . . . [Closer] cooperation between university administration and faculty members engaged in federally funded research can be beneficial both to the university and the Government. Regardless of the organizational form through which this cooperative endeavor occurs within the university, the objective should be a clearer understanding by principal investigators of their responsibilities when expending Federal funds. The university should also develop an internal scrutiny of proposals which will insure that the research proposed is carefully drawn and consistent with the purposes of the institution. . . . When a university employs practices of this nature, Federal agencies can have greater confidence both with respect to the university's administrative competence and its full acceptance of responsibility for the research proposals initiated by its faculty. [From "The Administration of Government Supported Research at Universities"]

of administrative regulations and procedures and would simultaneously reduce the administrative workload of the university scientist and administrator." But again, with a view to protecting the universities, the Bureau adds the warning that "compromise reached in the process of standardization can result in every agency accepting every other agency's procedural safeguards. This could prove equally uncomfortable to the agencies and to the universities and actually result in less effective management than now exists."

It is something of a toss-up as to whether the Bureau's prescriptions will be more rapidly followed in the federal establishment or in the universities. Perhaps the most durable characteristic of federal research policy is that it tends to evolve in geological time. In part this is because of realization that research is a delicate enterprise and

should not be subjected to sudden policy shifts, but there is also a viscosity in the federal apparatus that tends to gum up any departure from the old way of doing things. Charles L. Schultze, director of the Bureau of the Budget, has instructed all federal agencies to get in step with the recommendations and inform him of their progress by 1 October. But whether anyone will even remember all this by 1 October is not an absolute certainty.

As for the universities, their inhabitants are by no means of one mind on the issue of whether the focus of power in research administration should move from Washington to the campus. In the view of many people at the bench, the distant tyranny of a Washington bureaucrat is preferable to the close surveillance of the department chairman. Furthermore, for those in and out of government who know their way

around, there is a good deal of advantage in the federal science establishment being a complicated, haphazard structure, rather than a rationalized organization governed by standardized policies.

The genesis of the Bureau's report further reveals the widespread impact of Congressman Fountain's attacks on NIH. As noted before, they led to the Academy study. They also inspired the Office of Science and Technology to undertake the comprehensive study of NIH that resulted in the Woolridge Report (*Science*, 26 March 1965). Fountain can also take some credit for inspiring the Academy to a continued interest in federal science policies, as well as for tipping off his congressional colleagues to the fact that there is po-

litical pay dirt to be found in examining the government's multi-billion-dollar annual investment in research and associated matters.

It was following Fountain's report on NIH that Representative William L. Dawson (D-Ill.), chairman of the Government Operations Committee, of which Fountain's subcommittee is a part, suggested that the Office of Science and Technology produce some guidelines for federal support of research. OST concluded that the Bureau of the Budget would be a more suitable setting for such a study, and it was assigned there, but carried out in close consultation with OST. The actual study, involving detailed examinations of the activities of seven major government agencies, 13 universities, and five

private foundations, was performed by J. Lee Westrate, a political scientist who went from OST to become senior management analyst for science, technology, and education, at the Bureau; Benjamin Selfon, in the Bureau's office of financial management; Laurin Henry, a political scientist who formerly was with the Brookings Institution and now is at the University of Virginia; and David Z. Robinson, a physicist on the OST staff. The close collaboration between OST and the Bureau of the Budget points up one of the political realities of OST's existence. OST is influential not because it intrinsically has power but because it has acquired the confidence of the Bureau of the Budget, and when the Bureau speaks federal agencies listen.—D. S. GREENBERG

Education: Facilities Grants Forbidden to Baptist Colleges

It is written that Samson, inspired by the Lord, slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. Samson's prodigious feat is like unto the task which now confronts the leaders of the South's major Baptist colleges. They must do battle with a formidable demonology which is gripping many of their coreligionists. They must help their fellow Baptists cast out a besetting fear of the federal government and the money it can bestow.

State Baptist conventions throughout most of the South, and some non-Southern state affiliates of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), are opposing the acceptance by Baptist colleges of federal grants under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. Acceptance of the grants would be looked upon as a breach of the doctrine of separation of church and state. The conventions of a few Southern states have not yet declared their opposition to the grants, but, according to the president of SBC, this is only because no college in those states has dared raise the issue.

The state conventions generally have not protested other forms of federal aid to churches and Baptist colleges. For example, tax exemptions on church income and special postal rates for church publications have been welcomed. Similarly, benefits such as student fellowships, research grants and contracts, and low-interest loans for dormitory construction usually have not been opposed for the colleges.

The fact that these other forms of federal support are often accepted is cited by some Baptist educators as evidence that the church opposition to facilities grants is emotional and irrational. (The acceptance of research grants is excused by some Baptist ministers on the grounds that the grants will be repaid by services rendered. Facilities grants, on the other hand, are regarded by these churchmen as an outright gift.)

Scores of colleges with ties to denominations other than Southern Baptist are applying for and receiving facilities grants. Why do the Southern Baptists, apparently alone among the major de-

nominations, deny their colleges this privilege? The answer seems to lie in a curious tangle of factors.

Many denominational colleges have self-perpetuating boards of trustees, and this is even true of the colleges founded by the Northern Baptist Convention (now the American Baptist Convention). In fact, there are now no major Baptist schools except those with ties to the Southern Baptists. For example, the University of Chicago, once Baptist, is no longer considered a denominational institution.

The temperament and make-up of the Southern Baptists help to explain why the facilities grants have become an issue. First of all, strict fundamentalists—men and women who look on anything beyond a literal interpretation of the Bible with profound distrust—are numerous in the denomination. The fact that they are usually Southerners as well as conservative Baptists is in itself significant. Some Southerners still harbor a distrust of outsiders, and many still worry about the Negro and the erosion of segregationist practices; mingling of these attitudes with the fundamentalist Baptist outlook can lead to massive resistance to any influences that wear, or can be given, an even vaguely alien label.

Certain peculiarities of the Southern Baptist leadership and governmental structure also seem to have created circumstances favoring the kind of outcry that has been raised against the facilities grants. For instance, every church can decide upon the qualifications of its