further development of the "interface" between the social and the natural sciences.

A way to encourage research on fundamental problems and to protect the scholarly independence of social scientists is for the government to make large "block" grants of research funds to universities. The university would use the money at its own discretion, though some funds might be earmarked by the granting agency for use in neglected areas of research. Alex Inkeles of Harvard's Center for International Studies has suggested that the operations of the United Kingdom's University Grants Commission be looked to as a model.

Perhaps another major advantage of the block-grant approach would be the fact that it would give NSF, NSSF, or perhaps a U.S. equivalent of the British grants commission some insulation from political reprisal. At least, the granting agency's officials, having fewer decisions to make as to the kind of research to be supported, would be less exposed to attack.

The issues confronting the social scientists in their relations with government are obviously difficult, and do not lend themselves to hasty responses. There is, then, perhaps merit in Representative Fascell's proposal for a White House conference on the social sciences. The American Political Science Association has endorsed the proposal, and certain other associations are said to have done so as well. Preparations for the conference would require a year or more. Thus, those now at work on the NAS- and SSRC-sponsored studies might have time to arrive at some well-considered conclusions as to the new institutional arrangements which relations between the social sciences and government require.

—LUTHER J. CARTER

Unplugging the Muted Trumpet: Senate Says—NIH, Blow Your Horn

"The American people as a whole have no concept at all of what NIH has done."—SENATOR LISTER HILL

"I never knew there was an NIH, or that the federal government sponsored medical research, until I moved to Washington recently."—A WASHINGTON TEACHER

Congress is continually telling executive agencies that they spend too much money and energy in trumpeting their own activities. Congressmen usually regard this effort as an attempt to build up popular support, which is then mobilized to help prevent the budget cutting desired by a frugal legislative branch. Congress often feels bothered enough about such executive self-promotion to place severe financial, and even legal, limitations on the methods by which agencies can publicize their activities.

With this background in mind, it is understandable why Washington observers were somewhat surprised recently to read a Senate Appropriations Committee report which commanded the National Institutes of Health "to undertake a more vigorous and imaginative public information program dedicated to the public understanding of their activities."

This unique injunction must be viewed in the perspective of the favorable attitude of Congress toward NIH. The fact that NIH's appropriations have been rapidly increasing in the last decade is due more to congressional pressure than to ardent concern on the part of the executive. Not only does Congress tend to accept the amounts for NIH requested by the administration, but it often improves on them.

Congress feels able to increase the appropriations allocated for NIH because there are no important lobbies opposed to federal support of biomedical research. All congressmen and their constituents can be afflicted with disease, and congressmen feel that they can "do good" for humanity through ample support of medical research.

But congressmen find it disturbing to vote more than a billion dollars annually to NIH and then find that their constituents have never heard of the institution. The process becomes even more difficult when congressmen are compelled to justify appropriating *more* money than the President requests to subsidize an agency which is relatively unknown to the public. Congressmen believe that the administration itself would be more openhanded with funds if NIH would do a better job of explaining its activities.

NIH director James A. Shannon admits that his agency hasn't done enough in the public information area, even though NIH is well known in the educational and professional fields. One of the main reasons why NIH does not get the publicity it deserves is that it has a long-established policy of letting an NIH grant-holder announce his findings through his own institution. "The fact that the man was working on an NIH grant will probably be omitted in the newspaper stories, even if a line about the NIH is included in the press release put out by the university," explains Jane Stafford, Assistant Chief of NIH's Office of Research Information.

NIH's silence on such discoveries annoys its congressional champions. "NIH is not keeping us informed," said one Senate Appropriations Committee source in an interview. "We'll ask them every year, 'Tell us about your progress' and they won't have anything to say. Then we'll read in a newspaper that Joe Smith of, say, the University of Pittsburgh, has made some discovery. The story won't mention a thing about NIH. Then we'll call up NIH, and they'll tell us, 'Oh, yes, he's been working on an NIH grant for the last 10 years.' Not only should the NIH keep Congress better informed, but they also have a great responsibility to keep John Q. Public better informed."

For several years, Senator Lister Hill (D–Ala.), chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee which approves NIH's funds, has been telling NIH to do more public information work. In the subcommittee's hearings this year, Hill was joined in this request by Senator Norris Cotton (N.H.), the subcommittee's ranking Republican. After expressing their concern in person to Shannon, Hill and his subcommittee

members felt strongly enough about the matter to take the unusual step of writing a formal request for greater public information activity by NIH into the committee's report to the Senate this autumn.

Although some in NIH claim that there will now be a general strengthening of information activities there, the NIH leadership seems to be of two minds on this question. As Shannon told Hill's subcommittee earlier this year, "I would not want a Madison Avenue approach to NIH image building. . . . I am not sure whether, in the long run, it is better to do too little there than too much."

At present, the various institutes composing NIH spend about $1 million annually and employ about 100 people on public information activities. There seems to be little inclination among NIH leaders to markedly increase these figures for fiscal year 1968. As one official commented, "We have a tight budget situation with Vietnam, and public information doesn't have a very high priority."

Questioning Basic Research

To some observers, one of the advantages of more public information activity might be a greater understanding of NIH's need to subsidize basic research. NIH's attention to such research has elicited an increasing number of questions, both from Congress and from the Executive branch. Earlier this year (*Science*, 8 July) President Johnson raised the most important challenge when he noted that a "great deal" of basic medical research had been done and that he intended to show heightened interest in the more immediate results of that research. The President, who has said that he wants the life expectancy of Americans increased by 5 years, stated on 15 June that he wanted "specific results in the decline in deaths and disabilities."

NIH officials say they do not believe that the President is hostile to basic research. As one said, in describing the President's feelings about NIH, "What he seemed to be saying to us was something like, 'It's okay to do this basic research, but what are you doing in terms that I can translate to the man on the street, the taxpayer? You use these big words and phrases, but what does this research do to improve the health of the man on the street?' " Although NIH officials expect the amount spent on basic research to increase in future years, they anticipate that the effect of Presidential concern will be a more pronounced rate of growth in the money given to applied medical research.

Despite President Johnson's comments, the Senate Appropriations Committee, in its report this autumn, rejected the argument that NIH was devoting too much of its attention to basic research. The committee said that the conduct of NIH programs was "basically sound" and that "the current discussion of possible shifts from basic to applied research has not reflected an understanding of this pattern of activity. . . . 60 percent of NIH research expenditures fall in the applied area, while only 40 percent of these funds are employed in the support of basic research upon which the whole structure of medical knowledge depends. This expenditure cannot be reduced . . . it must expand."

This year, both Hill's Senate subcommittee and the House Appropriations subcommittee headed by Representative John E. Fogarty (D–R.I.) warned that the requests submitted by the administration for NIH were insufficient. Their subcommittees were successful in getting Congress to appropriate $1.412 billion for NIH, about $109 million more than the administration had requested. Included in this $109-million supplement was a $35-million increase (to $56 million) in grants for the construction of health research facilities. The Senate committee also complained that not enough funds were being provided to train faculty members for the additional medical schools which would be necessary in the next decade, and asked NIH to submit proposals to remedy this deficiency early in the next congressional session.

House Criticizes Administration

The House committee was not quite so generous as the Senate committee in adding funds to the administration's request, but it was equally scathing in its criticism of the inadequate amounts given NIH. The committee's report stated that the administration budget makes no allowance for initiating or accelerating research and "does not even make adequate provision for sustaining the momentum of already existing programs." It noted that the administration had proposed a total of about $459 million for NIH's regular research grant programs, an increase of only 4.3 percent above the 1966 figure. The committee argued that NIH should be given a 15-percent annual increment in research support, the same increase as that applied by the Bureau of the Budget to the requests for the National Science Foundation. The House committee warned that current failure to support research adequately would have highly undesirable consequences: "If health research is allowed to lose momentum today the improvement in health services will inevitably lose momentum a few years hence. The time lost can never be made up—if research is allowed to lag, people will continue that much longer to succumb to diseases that might be prevented and some will die who might have been cured."

At one point in the Senate appropriations hearings, Senator E. L. Bartlett (D–Alaska) said that the Bureau of the Budget had "brutalized" part of this year's NIH budget. Further "brutalization" may be in store for NIH in the Presidential budget which is now being prepared for the fiscal year beginning 1 July 1967. Although Shannon is obligated to support the President's budget before Congress, at one point in this year's Senate hearings, he seemed to express doubts about what future restrictions might do to NIH: "We can curtail our activities for a year as a result of an acute international emergency, but, sir, we cannot do that for long. I have been through this once," Shannon said, as he explained regretfully that there had been no substantial expansion in NIH activities in the 5 years that followed the beginning of the Korean War.

President Johnson has tried to play down the costs of the Vietnam War, but he has finally admitted that the United States is spending $2 billion monthly to finance the conflict. This figure is much more likely to increase than to decline. In light of this burden, it becomes difficult to press the Bureau of the Budget and the President to allocate large sums for nonmilitary research. Although NIH might make its selling job easier if it devoted more energy to advertising its research accomplishments, the increasing costs of Vietnam may render all such public relations efforts irrelevant to the task of increasing research money. From NIH, as from other nonmilitary sections of the federal government, the passer-by may be able to hear the crunch of broken budgets and fractured programs in the months ahead.—BRYCE NELSON