

Defense Research: Questions for Vietnam Dissenters

Defense Department agencies which support basic research in universities are beginning to question renewal of contracts with investigators who are publicly critical of the Vietnam war.

In recent weeks letters have gone out from the Army Research Office (ARO) and the Office of Naval Research (ONR) raising the matter with several mathematicians who are principal investigators on unclassified basic research projects. No projects have been canceled, but, in one case which is apparently unique, the Army Research Office has told investigators that a decision to terminate the relationship when the contract expires "appears to be consistent with both our positions." The ONR letters reportedly are less specific, but ONR is asking a few of its contractors who have taken a public position against the war whether they feel they should continue under ONR auspices.

Agency action was apparently triggered by a paid announcement, with about 345 signatures, in the August *Notices* of the American Mathematical Society (AMS). The text of the announcement was as follows: "MATHEMATICIANS: Job opportunities are announced in the *Notices* of the AMS in the Employment Register, and elsewhere. We urge you to regard yourselves as responsible for the uses to which your talents are put. We believe this responsibility forbids putting mathematics in the service of this cruel war."

The same announcement appeared in the *Notices* twice in 1967 and again in January of this year, when there were some 94 signers. As far as *Science* can now determine, only signers of the announcement are involved in the ARO and ONR initiative.

Affected by the Army action is a contract for mathematics research held by professors Lucien LeCam and J. Neyman of the department of statistics at the University of California, Berkeley. Neyman is also understood to be principal investigator in an ONR-supported atmospheric research project and to be an addressee of one of the ONR letters.

At the time of the *Science* deadline Neyman was out of the country and LeCam declined to release the text of the Army letter in his colleague's absence. However, news of the letter, sent early in September, has been circulating in the mathematics community in Washington and beyond, as has word of the ONR letters.

The LeCam-Neyman project is funded at \$33,000 for the current year. The relationship with the Army is now 16 years old, and the funds normally pay summer salaries for LeCam and Neyman and support four or five graduate students engaged in work on the project. From time to time junior faculty members have also been partly supported by the federal funds.

The Army letter pointedly notes that the results of the research done under the contract have been used in various activities related to the Vietnam war and that consultation with the principal investigators has also been useful.

"Unfortunate Circumstances"

Then the letter goes on to say that the mathematicians have every right to their own opinions and convictions, but that their relationship with the Defense Department must be an "embarrassment," and that, in view of the "unfortunate circumstances," a mutually acceptable decision to end the contract when it expires next June appears consistent.

Spokesmen for both the Army and the ONR say that the researchers affected are first-rate mathematicians and should have no difficulty in gaining support from nondefense agencies like the National Science Foundation, an assumption that might be viewed as optimistic in this tight-budget year. The Army says it stands ready to do what it reasonably can to help if termination of the project creates hardships for graduate students.

Sources in ONR say that four letters have been sent to mathematicians who signed the *Notices* protest, but these sources declined to name the persons involved or make public the text of the letter, since the letters were mailed only

last week and might not have reached the addressees.

ONR Chief Scientist Peter King said the letters represent an "isolated incident" and not a new policy. King, like other officials in research-supporting agencies, declined to elaborate on policy implications of the actions. The Air Force Office of Scientific Research supports research by some signers of the *Notices* ad, but says it has no letters in the works.

It is known that the question of what course to follow in responding to public criticism of the war by contract researchers has been under discussion in the Pentagon for some time. It is understood that a number of university researchers who are contractors or consultants to Defense agencies have signed published petitions of the "Stop-the-Bombing" variety with apparent impunity. The ad in the AMS *Notices*, however, seems to have struck a nerve in the Pentagon, perhaps because it appeared in a professional publication and amounted to an appeal to mathematicians not to do defense-related research.

Agency action is probably partly explicable in terms of congressional displeasure with campus critics of the war, reflected in legislative sanctions against those who receive federal funds and engage in protest against the war. Protests against classified research in the universities have also roused the ire of some legislators.

Within the Pentagon the view seems to be that basic research is supported because of its ultimate value for military operations, and that, if researchers protest current operations, the Department of Defense is justified in raising the question of conscience.

There are signs within the Pentagon of reluctance to push for a confrontation. The tone of the Army letter, which might be described as overconsiderate, suggests this. Civilian scientists in military agencies have close ties with the scientific community and are reluctant to alienate their university colleagues.

And there is a tradition, within the military, of supporting basic research and of dealing with the "best people." In practical terms, the military derives important secondary benefits from supporting academic research. Military applications of contract research results are brought to Pentagon attention by the investigators, who also are available as consultants. Contract work pro-

vides an excellent recruiting ground for young scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. And there is always an awareness that close liaison with the universities is desirable against the day of possible total mobilization. For these reasons and others, responsible officials might regret being pushed toward a policy which would increase tensions between the military and university researchers.

There can be little doubt, however, that the letters introduce a new strain into the relationship. It is too early to gauge the reaction of mathematicians at large. *Science* talked to several mathematicians who signed the *Notices* announcement, and few expressed surprise. Not untypical was the remark of one that, "if people criticize the Army, Navy and Air Force, it's perfectly well for the Army, Navy and Air Force

to reconsider doing business with them." But there was little evidence of sympathy for those responsible for managing military-supported university research during an undeclared war which is unpopular in the universities. ONR and ARO had the candor to put their questions in writing. Now quite a few people are wondering whether this "isolated incident" could escalate.

—JOHN WALSH

California: Reagan and the Public Health Controversy

California. The battles between Governor Ronald Reagan and the University of California have received considerable attention in the national press. Less noticed outside of California, but no less intense, have been the conflicts between the Reagan administration and two groups of health professionals. This article will examine the struggle between Reagan and the public health authorities in California. A second article will review the fight between Reagan and the mental health establishment.

The public health battle has raged off and on for much of this year, though it has recently shown signs of quieting down. Rightly or wrongly, several prominent health leaders in the state concluded that Reagan's conservative philosophy—particularly his emphasis on economy, his aversion to a big governmental role in health matters, his tendency to seek solutions at the local rather than state level, and in the private rather than public sector—posed a threat to the effectiveness of public health services in California. Some even charged, perhaps overdramatically, that Reagan was on the verge of wrecking the state department of public health—though they generally assumed he was doing so inadvertently rather than deliberately. "This administration has an utter lack of the sense of professionalism—it thinks the government can be run best by amateurs," Roger O. Egeberg, president of the state board of health and dean of the school of medicine at the University of Southern California, told *Science*.

At issue in the struggle is the future of a health department that Berwyn

F. Mattison, executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA), rates as "one of the leaders in public health work over the past decade or so." The department, which is operating on a total budget of some \$101.5 million (state, federal, and private funds) in fiscal year 1969, up from \$89.5 million last year, conducts a variety of programs aimed at preventing disease, improving the quality of the environment, and ensuring the availability of high-quality health services. Among other achievements, the department is said to have pioneered in developing and implementing health care standards through its licensing programs; in devising new forms of health services, such as multiphasic screening; in controlling such diseases as plague, tularemia, Q-fever, and coccidioidomycosis; and in developing programs for the detection, prevention, and rehabilitation of chronic diseases. The department provides substantial funding and technical assistance to local health programs. It also conducts a sizable research program, including epidemiological studies and laboratory research in fields related to public health problems. Two of the seven prospective studies that provided the principal data on death rates of smokers and nonsmokers for the Surgeon General's 1964 report on "Smoking and Health" were compiled by department researchers.

Though the department suffered a 10 percent cut in state funding in fiscal 1968 at the hands of the Reagan administration, and though it suffered a cut in authorized manpower in both fiscal 1968 and fiscal 1969, most public

health leaders acknowledge that the cuts, as Egeberg puts it, "have not been a great tragedy." Instead, the fears of the public health leaders stem from several actions and anticipated actions that have thrown doubt on the intentions of the Reagan administration.

The first major incident that caused alarm was Reagan's failure to reappoint Lester Breslow, a Democrat, as state director of public health when his term expired at the end of last year. Egeberg rates Breslow, who is president-elect of the American Public Health Association, as "one of the two or three best public health officers in the country." Breslow had been in the department since 1946 and had been director since 1965. He seems to have been dropped because of his liberal views on Medicare and other controversial social programs.

Breslow, now a professor in the school of public health at UCLA, told *Science* that the incoming Reagan administration, which took office on 1 January 1967, first asked for his resignation in December 1966. At the urging of friends and various public health leaders, Breslow refused to resign. He took the position that the public health director had deliberately been given an appointment that overlaps gubernatorial administrations in order to insulate the post from politics, and that to resign before completing his term would violate this principle.

So Breslow stayed on, and, as things turned out, there were no substantial conflicts between Breslow and the administration. Spencer Williams, Reagan's health and welfare administrator, even recommended that Breslow be reappointed. But Reagan ignored Williams' suggestion, primarily, according to sources within the Reagan administration, because powerful elements in the California Medical Association wanted Breslow ousted.

Breslow was not, technically, fired or "let go." He was simply told that