

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **LOWERING THE BOOM:** A federally sponsored panel of 12 scientists, chaired by John C. Calhoun, Jr., of Texas A & M University, has urged prohibiting all but experimental supersonic flights over populated inland areas until more is known about the public's response to sonic boom effects. The report, initiated by the Interior Department a year ago, estimated that regular overland supersonic flights could subject 20 to 40 million Americans to 5 to 50 severe sonic booms a day. In announcing the report, Secretary Stewart Udall said that "sonic boom should be regarded as a form of environmental pollution as serious . . . as water pollution," and panel member Roger Revelle of Harvard criticized the Federal Aviation Administration for not taking adequate steps to find out what noise levels would be acceptable to the public. The report also recommends that a presidential commission be established to hold public hearings on the sonic boom and that large-scale experiments be carried out to simulate intercity commercial SST flights to learn their effects on population groups.

● **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR ENGINEERS:** A nationwide organization is being formed to initiate collective bargaining for engineers. The Council of Engineers and Scientists Organization, which now has 13 local collective bargaining member organizations, will be established nationwide to work in legislative activities, as well as to bargain for higher wages for engineers in industry. Council officials say the organization represents about 40,000 engineers.

● **COAST GUARD RESEARCH:** The Coast Guard has established an Office of Research and Development to meet future needs in marine sciences, to improve search and rescue operations, and to develop aids for navigation and marine safety. The new office will administer the National Data Buoy Project for gathering weather and meteorological information; engineering research to develop new equipment and facilities; and a human resources division to assess human behavior in a marine environment. About \$4 million will be available this year from existing projects.

tional Science Board, since he thinks it important that the nation's principal science posts be filled by different people.

Squibb Directorship

A question has also been raised about whether, if elected Academy president, Handler would resign his position as a director of Squibb Beech-Nut Inc., a major producer of drugs and foods. (E. R. Squibb & Sons merged with Beech-Nut in January; Handler has been a Squibb director since 1966.) Handlers' ownership stake in the company does not seem very large; according to SEC records he owns 234 shares of common stock in Squibb Beech-Nut, which are worth about \$12,000 on today's market. Because of the educational and financial advantages of his position as a director, it is understandable why Handler is reluctant to resign this post. On the other hand, there are scientists who cite the Academy's studies on the effectiveness of drugs and on foods and argue that holding such a corporate directorship might involve a real or apparent conflict of interests. Handler, in discussing this directorship, pointed out that he had informed both the Academy Council and the Academy's nominating committee of his position with Squibb Beech-Nut.

Rewards of the Academy

It is obvious that the Academy presidency is a coveted spot, and not only because it comes with a \$45,000-a-year salary and a \$250,000 Washington residence. In the world of science the Academy presidency offers a unique position of prestige and influence, as well as an absence of some of the problems which face other administrators, such as university presidents.

After it was announced in April that Seitz was leaving for Rockefeller, there was a flurry of activity by Academy members on behalf of their chosen candidates. It is said that nominating petitions were circulated for several Academy members, including Handler, AEC Chairman Glenn T. Seaborg, *Science* editor Philip H. Abelson, and Academy Foreign Secretary Harrison Brown. In July, Merle A. Tuve, the Academy's Home Secretary, was directed by the Council to write all Academy members urging them to send their suggestions to the nominating committee rather than submit petitions before the committee had made its choice. Apparently it was feared that a formal petition would be submitted before the committee acted,

which would upset the Academy's cherished tradition of presenting an appearance of unanimity in its selection of officers. Candidates other than those mentioned above who were seriously considered by the committee (headed by Harry Eagle of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York) are said to have included Harvey Brooks, Harvard's dean of engineering and applied physics, and physicist Charles H. Townes of Berkeley. The committee has reportedly nominated Harvard chemist George B. Kistiakowsky for another 4-year term as vice president of the Academy.

The nominating committee had a plethora of respected men from which to choose, but, even when one considers the abundance of human resources, it is not surprising that it selected Handler. One member of the nominating committee gave *Science* five reasons for the committee's selection:

1) Handler has "a broad view of science." His interests and knowledge extend far beyond his own discipline.

2) He is a good committee chairman, with the ability "to enlist the enthusiastic hard work of people." The committee member said this was especially important in a group as large as the Academy.

3) He has "genuine administrative ability." The member explained that the Academy had grown much more active in the Bronx and Seitz presidencies and had acquired a large staff, which increases the demands for executive leadership.

4) He is well acquainted with Washington but is not identified with partisan politics. To an extent, he is associated with NSF, the member commented, "but NSF is the broadest of the science organizations and the least political."

5) He can "represent science with dignity and ability."

Handler's Views on the Academy

One of the most sensitive problems of any Academy president will be to help define the proper relationship of the Academy to the federal government. Some Academy members are troubled by the large number of studies which the Academy does for the Defense Department, including classified work. In his recent interview with *Science*, Handler indicated no desire to change the existing relationship of the Academy to the Department of Defense if elected Academy president. "The Academy has an obligation to contribute to the national defense," he