

## Nixon Forms Advisory Panels on Science, Space, Health

Responsible new executives often create "task forces" to make recommendations on the great issues that will confront them in office. If such advice is not made public, it is difficult to determine if it has been useful. But, whether the advice is useful or not, the mere creation of such panels gives the impression that problems are being given learned consideration.

Since 21 November, Richard Nixon has announced the creation of a host of panels to prepare reports on domestic issues for his Administration before Inauguration Day. Paul W. McCracken of the University of Michigan, recently appointed chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers by Nixon, is in overall charge of these task forces; Henry Loomis, a former director of the Voice of America and deputy commissioner of education in the Johnson Administration, is executive director for these groups. It was Loomis who approached people to ask if they would assume chairmanships of these panels.

The members of each group have been selected by the group's chairman. The Nixon camp has asked the chairmen to keep the names of the panel members secret, and has said that the panel reports will not be made public. Some of the panels which may be of special interest to *Science* readers include the following:

- **SCIENCE**—headed by H. Guyford Stever, an aeronautical engineer who is president of Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh.
- **SPACE**—headed by Charles H. Townes of the University of California at Berkeley, winner of the Nobel prize for physics in 1964.
- **EDUCATION**—headed by Alan Pifer, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- **HEALTH**—headed by John T. Dunlop, professor of economics at Harvard.
- **TRANSPORTATION**—headed by Charles L. Miller, chairman of M.I.T.'s civil engineering department.
- **RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**—headed by Judge Russell Train, president of the Conservation Foundation, in Washington, D.C.

The creation of the health and education panels was announced on 4 December. Creation of the panels on science and space was announced the preceding day, when Nixon disclosed that he was naming Caltech president Lee A. DuBridge as his science adviser. Nixon pointed out that both Stever and Townes had received their Ph.D.'s at Caltech. Those who are looking for reason to find fault with the Nixon choices of advisers on science-related matters could point to the fact that these men are, in many ways, representatives of the "Cambridge-California axis" of physical scientists which has long played a dominant role in American science. DuBridge was the head of the M.I.T. radiation laboratory from 1940 to 1945, where Stever worked for a year. Stever taught at M.I.T. from 1946 to 1964; Townes was M.I.T.'s provost from 1961 to 1966.

Some of the panels have not yet met, but the science group held its first meeting in Washington on 6 December. In an interview with *Science*, chairman Stever ex-

plained that he had taken "a broad view of science" in choosing the members of his panel, and had selected people from the physical, life, engineering, social, and behavioral sciences, and from academic institutions, government laboratories, and industry. In addition to his academic duties, Stever has been active in advising the federal government on defense and space subjects. He served as chief scientist for the Air Force in 1955-56 and as a member of the Defense Science Board.

For some of the panels, such as space and health, the Nixon forces picked chairmen who were not closely connected with the areas to be studied. Although Townes has done some advising for NASA's manned space program, he noted in an interview that he had "not been intimately involved with this area." Townes said he had received the impression that Nixon headquarters wanted someone "who was not in a prejudicial position" to look at the space program.

The individual panels have been given fairly general mandates to range over the entire field to which they have been assigned. The panels seem to have been issued the following general instructions: (i) to articulate issues in their field at all levels; (ii) to provide arguments pro and con on the alternative courses of action suggested; (iii) to set priorities on the actions that will be required by the Nixon administration in each field.

Other presidents have used the task-force approach in recent years. President Kennedy appointed panels in 1960 and later made many of their reports public. President Johnson has also appointed such groups, but has tended to refuse to release their reports or the names of their members. Nixon seems to be veering more toward the closed-doors approach, even though in the campaign he roundly deplored "the credibility gap" of the Johnson Administration and said he would create "an open administration" which would have "open doors."

No one is going to raise a fuss with Mr. Nixon about a small matter like private task forces with secret reports. Nonetheless, the question is bound to arise—how can we expect the President to be fully candid on large matters if he is not going to be fully candid on small ones?—BRYCE NELSON

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### Laird Choice Indicated

Representative Melvin R. Laird (R-Wis.) is reported to be Richard Nixon's choice as Secretary of Defense. Laird's selection for the Defense position is a blow to those interested in health and education. Laird is the senior Republican on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Education and Welfare. Since the death of subcommittee chairman John E. Fogarty (D-R.I.), health and education representatives have increasingly relied on Laird to defend their interests in the House Appropriations Committee. Laird has made a special name for himself as champion of health research and of NIH.