

Laird Seeks Industry Aid to Defeat Mansfield Amendment

When Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) set out last year to restrict Pentagon-funded research, his amendment (Section 203) to the annual military authorization bill went almost unnoticed (*Science*, 14 November 1969).

Recently, however, concern about the effect of the amendment on academic institutions and other agencies of government has reached a high pitch, despite assurances from Pentagon officials that the monetary impact will be slight in the current fiscal year.

Last week Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird announced that he actively opposes congressional attempts to impose restraints on research and development paid for by the Pentagon, and sought support from defense industries for an effort to repeal Section 203.

The Mansfield amendment requires the Pentagon to certify that research has "a direct and apparent relationship to a specific military function or operation."

Estimates of the impact of the amendment vary. Mansfield himself has indicated that all basic and applied research conducted for the Pentagon should be re-examined and, if necessary, terminated or transferred in an orderly fashion to the National Science Foundation or a more appropriate mission agency, such as the National Institutes of Health. Two weeks ago Representative Emilio Q. Daddario (D-Conn.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Science, Research and Development, suggested that the Pentagon will cancel some \$50 million in research because of the amendment. Daddario also expressed concern that other mission agencies might adopt similar policies (*Science*, 13 March).

But officials of the Office of Defense Research and Engineering last week said their rough, preliminary figures show that only about \$8 million to \$10 million worth of current basic research (out of a budget of \$368.5 million) fails to meet the new criterion of military relevance. The officials privately guess that another \$5 million to \$10 million of applied research may also fail to pass the new test when the screening process is completed next month.

Although defense research officials have decided to administer the Mansfield amendment in ways that will minimize its disruptive effect on their programs, Laird chose to stress the maximum potential effect of the law in a speech on 11 March. He spoke at the annual government-industry dinner of the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), to an audience that included representatives of nearly half of the top 50 defense contractors. The Mansfield amendment, he said, "makes it impossible for us to continue the important program of basic research that the Defense Department must support in order for us to compete with the Soviet Union in the advances that they are making in the scientific and technological fields."

In a digression from the prepared text of the speech, Laird invited industry and the universities to help him defeat congressional efforts to restrict military research. "We are working with your industry in this area not only as far as industry-related research is concerned," he said (a reference to proposals to restrict "independent research

and development"), "but particularly as far as our colleges and universities are concerned, to repeal Section 203." Laird said the relevance standard set by the Mansfield amendment "cannot be certified by me as Secretary of Defense as required by the United States Congress because in the basic research area we cannot tell as basic research starts out that it will have an overriding military significance."

In the prepared text, Laird merely expressed concern that the relevance requirement of Section 203 might "tend to discourage talented scientists from potentially productive research areas."

"We are complying with that requirement," he added.

Officials of the Electronic Industries Association were a little puzzled by Laird's appreciation of their efforts to defeat the Mansfield amendment, since they were not aware of having paid any attention to the matter. But, one official concluded, Laird "was telling us why we ought to become concerned" about Section 203, "and I guess we will."

A quick check last week also failed to disclose any signs of highly organized university opposition to the Mansfield amendment. But Pentagon officials and a number of congressional offices report frequent contacts with university officials who want to know what effect it will have on their budgets. Now it should soon become clear how far Mansfield and his supporters will be able to push their efforts to curb military influence by changing the pattern of federal science support.

In his address to the EIA, Laird opposed another legislative proposal which, like the Mansfield amendment, seeks to curb Pentagon support of research and development. The bill, sponsored by Senator William Proxmire (D-Wis.), would place tight restrictions on Pentagon payments to defense contractors for "independent research and development" (IR & D).

At present, about half of the annual \$1.5 billion in research and development work initiated by defense contractors (IR & D) is allowed as an overhead cost on defense and space agency contracts. The principal beneficiaries of these payments, which totaled over \$800 million in fiscal 1969, are the major defense industries, and they are up in arms against the bill. According to Proxmire, the Pentagon now permits wide latitude in the definition of allowable IR & D costs and makes no effort to control the growth of IR & D claims. Proxmire's staff claims to have evidence that companies have collected payments for work done to develop commercial applications of products produced under Pentagon contracts. The bill would apply the rule that now governs Atomic Energy Commission contracts to the Pentagon and to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The rule holds that the independent R & D costs may be covered by the government only if they are for work directly or indirectly of benefit to the purpose of the contract. "While I understand the concern of the Congress," Laird said, "I believe such restrictions would unnecessarily stifle new and imaginative efforts. The results would be to reduce the technological effectiveness of our defense-related industries."—ANDREW HAMILTON