is, is an "exaggeration" because it includes "ladies who had taken time off because they were pregnant or just had children, . . . people who decided to travel for a year . . . people who were wondering whether or not they had made their proper choice of a career, and so forth." Handler said he had found it "very difficult" to view a 1 percent unemployment figure "as any kind of a national tragedy or a genuinely serious situation." He said it is true that not all scientists landed the jobs to which they aspired, but he considered that more a "mark of success" than a tragedy since it indicates that we are now producing enough scientists to staff not only the major universities, but also smaller colleges and the laboratories of industry and government.

The upshot of Handler's testimony was that "we are in no danger of overproducing scientists." Rather, Handler warned, the apprehensions now afflicting young students may drive them away from science, with the result that "in the future we may be in jeopardy for the lack of size of a scientific community." Somewhat similar views were expressed, though less forcefully, by the four former science advisors who testified last week. They disagreed somewhat on the relative importance of the NSF's traineeship programs, but the consensus seemed to be that there is no good reason for a precipitous drop in federal support of graduate students.

Though all four of the emeritus science advisors were gloomy about the prospects for science, they were unable to cite much in the way of dramatic evidence, already visible, that American science has been damaged. Wiesner claimed that radioastronomy, computer sciences, and mathematics have all been "badly slowed" in recent years, and he said that whereas the United States used to be the best instrumented country in the world, it is starting to fall behind other nations in a number of fields. But, for the most part, the four witnesses were warning about damage that will take a few years, at least, to show up. And they were particularly concerned, as Wiesner said, that "the exciting new gambles" will not be taken because of the budget squeeze.

The one bright spot about the current budget crunch, from NSF's point of view, is that it may provide the agency with an unusual opportunity to increase its stature. The Foundation in recent years has generally provided less support for basic research than have four of the mission agencies, namely the Defense Department, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Institutes of Health and the Atomic Energy Commission. But this year, while the mission agencies are cutting back on support of basic research, NSF is moving ahead slightly. The Nixon budget would give NSF about $50 million more in 1971 than in the current year ($513 million, up from $463 million). And both the House and Senate authorizing committees are trying to give NSF substantially more than the Administration has requested. The House Committee on Science and Astronautics has already recommended that NSF receive $27.6 million more than requested, and Senator Kennedy, chairman of the authorizing committee in the Senate, has introduced a bill to give NSF $50 million more than requested. The actual amount that Congress grants NSF will be determined by the two appropriations committees, which have not yet been heard from, but the budget boosts recommended by Kennedy and by the House authorizing committee reflect a feeling that NSF, in a period of declining science budgets, must assume a more central role in preserving the scientific establishment.

That NSF is eager to fulfill such a function was readily apparent at the hearings before the Kennedy subcommittee. At one point McElroy, the NSF director, suggested that NSF might need "on the order of" $800 million in fiscal 1972 to fill the gaps left by the mission agencies. And Handler, in his role as head of the National Science Board, expressed a belief that NSF must become *the* science support agency. "For the first time I think one can state quite clearly that the strength of the American scientific enterprise in the years ahead really will rest on the programs of the National Science Foundation," he said. "This is not a statement I could have made equally confidently in the past . . . [But] as the mission agencies increasingly use their resources . . . to deal with the applied problems which are their principal concern, if we are to have a long-range scientific venture, and if it is to be as strong as we would like . . . then the federal government will have to support the Science Foundation as it was intended to be—the principal instrument by which the federal government supports the basic science endeavor." What's good for NSF, in other words, is good for the country.—PHILIP M. BOFFEY

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **CALL FOR BAN ON PCB'S:** Congressman William F. Ryan (D–N.Y.) has called for a ban on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), an ingredient used in plastics, adhesives, aluminum foil, cellophane, and insecticides. The chemical, manufactured solely by the Monsanto Company under the trade name of AROCLOR, has been found to be chemically similar to DDT according to some scientists. PCB's are believed to enter the environment through the weathering or friction wearing of AROCLOR materials and through the burning of those materials at high temperatures releasing possibly toxic vapors and fumes to the atmosphere. The Congressman has asked the Department of Agriculture to ban the use of PCB's in insecticides. He also asked the Food and Drug Administration to set food tolerance levels for PCB's and to conduct a study to determine if a ban is necessary.

● **POPULATION COMMISSION:** The President has signed a bill establishing a Commission on Population Growth and the National Future. The Commission will be composed of two Senators from different parties, two Representatives from different parties, and up to 20 others named by the President, who will designate the chairman. The Commission will study the probable course of population growth between now and the year 2000; inquire into the public resources required to deal with the anticipated growth; and determine the ways in which population growth may affect the activities of government. It will have 2 years to complete its work.

● **CANADA TO BAN DETERGENT PHOSPHATES:** J. J. Greene, Canadian Minister of Energy, Mines, and Resources, promised recently to introduce legislation banning phosphates from detergents within 2 years. Greene said the government would offer aid and incentives to provinces cleaning up their waters, and would join the United States in a drive against phosphates contaminating boundary waters such as the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. Representative Henry Reuss (D-Wis.) introduced a similar bill in the House last year, and Senator Gaylord Nelson (D–Wis.) introduced a similar bill recently in the Senate.