

## Nixon Administration Accused of Downgrading Science

A prominent science historian charged last week that "science has apparently dropped out of the high councils of the Nixon Administration." Surprisingly, a ranking Republican congressman seemed to agree, though he expressed a belief that the downgrading of science was temporary and was understandable in view of the distractions caused by war and domestic problems.

The charge that the Nixon Administration has thrown the system of science support into "disarray" was made on 7 July by A. Hunter Dupree, professor of history at Brown University, at the first day of hearings on national science policy before the House subcommittee on science, research and development, chaired by Representative Emilio Q. Daddario (D-Conn.). "The Administration is checking budgetary support, applying political tests to appointments for scientific positions and dismantling the organization for science within government," Dupree charged. "At the level of central scientific organization, the whole structure in the White House and the Executive Office of the President has dropped right off the organization charts," he added.

Dupree noted that in the post-Sputnik years an elaborate central science policy structure has grown up consisting of the President's Science Adviser, the President's Science Advisory Committee, the Office of Science and Technology, and the Federal Council of Science and Technology. Dupree acknowledged that many people have given the structure credit for "at least a partial success through most of the years since 1957." But he added: "What few of the people who built this structure contemplated was a serious change of attitude on the part of those who man the institutional Presidency itself. If the White House does not support the government-science partnership the whole formal mechanism is useless."

Dupree professed to see "unpleasant" evidence of "disarray" spread extensively on the public record. "At the government end of the plural system the whole of the health area has lost its bearings," he said. "Even if the departure of the director of the National Institute of Mental Health could be explained away (see *Science*, 12 and 19 June), the damage to mental health care centers at remote places where teams are being broken up and their research disrupted cannot be ignored."

Dupree also complained that the Administration is causing great problems in the universities by making fellowship cuts in fields favored in the past by government science policy, such as physics and medicine, without making compensating additions in "fields where an increased demand is clearly foreseen," such as the environment. Simultaneously, he added, the campuses have begun to question "many aspects of the connection between university and government," with the result that "the two parts of the government-university partnership are . . . moving away from one another . . . fast."

But Dupree was far from optimistic that the Administration will take steps to improve its science policies. "If the executive branch is thinking about science policy," he said, "no evidence of it gets into the public press . . . A single historian speaking only for himself as I do can hardly avoid gloom."

Dupree's "very rough" criticism of the Administration was challenged by Representative Charles A. Mosher (R-Ohio), the ranking Republican member of the subcommittee. Mosher asked whether the alleged downgrading of science cited by Dupree was "the result of an attitude, a considered decision on the part of this Administration" or whether it was "a temporary thing, a result of the necessities that the new Administration faced in terms of the inflationary crisis that the war situation inherited." More specifically, Mosher questioned whether Dupree was ignoring the Administration's proposal for a new National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) and a new independent agency to manage the environmental sciences as well as other initiatives.

But Dupree argued that all of the things mentioned by Mosher were "piecemeal things" whereas he (Dupree) was addressing himself to central scientific organization, of which there is "precious little" in the Nixon Administration. Dupree also complained that, under the Nixon Administration, "major reorganizations of science agencies emerge from commissions which have not called for public discussion nor given public critics an opportunity to be heard."

Dupree said that the degree to which science policy has declined can be seen by measuring from the "benchmark" provided by the appointment of James R. Killian, Jr., as President Eisenhower's science adviser immediately after the shock of Sputnik. "Where was science policy in the wake of Sputnik?" Dupree asked. "It was very high in the councils that were making priority decisions in the structural presidency." But "the present organization charts," Dupree said, don't put the central scientific organization "at anything like the interior circle."

Oddly enough, after seeming to challenge Dupree, Mosher ended up more or less agreeing with him while trying to explain the reasons for the decline in scientific influence. "The whole environment was so different after Sputnik," Mosher said. "There was the emotional, highly emotional concentration on the sciences, the shocked recognition that we had to do something. Now we are diverted by so many other things—the war, the economy, the disruptions in our society—that I am afraid the central organization of science . . . has taken a secondary role in the Administration's thinking, but I can understand it to some extent, and I would hope that it was only a temporary attitude or situation."

Testifying the next day, Lee A. DuBridge, President Nixon's science adviser, was not about to accept the assertion that his office was in a state of decline. DuBridge said he was "amused" to note that Dupree felt his office had been "wiped off the organization charts." "I don't know what organization charts he had been looking at because that was certainly news to me," DuBridge said. "I think it must be news to the President too since he gave a special reception in honor of the President's Science Advisory Committee the other evening. I don't think he realized we were off the organization chart."

Evidently dubious about the idea that attendance at a reception signified influence, Daddario, the subcommittee chairman, answered that Dupree had "made no charge that you had gone out of existence."—PHILIP M. BOFFEY