Nixon's Science Adviser: Genesis, Progress of a Surprise Appointment

The appointment of Edward E. David, Jr., as chief presidential science adviser evoked surprise because David was not a member or protégé of the fairly small group that had dominated the upper levels of government science advice since Sputnik.

Unlike his five predecessors in the job, all of them radar or nuclear researchers during World War II who then continued in or went on to academic careers, David, age 45, spent his career in an industrial research organization, Bell Laboratories. At the time of his appointment, announced 19 August, he headed a group of 200 researchers as executive director for research in the communication principles division. And, though he had a fair number of contacts with the science-government relationship through service on advisory groups, these were all at a relatively low level and did not include membership on the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC), which, traditionally, has been the preparatory body for presidential science advisers. PSAC, a part-time, self-perpetuating body which is customarily chaired by the president's science adviser, has traditionally played an unofficial but central role in selecting the man who is to serve the president on a full-time basis. But in David's case, it was not brought into the selection process, and his appointment apparently surprised most of its members as much as it did anyone else.

Thus, there is curiosity about David's route to the job, as well as an interest in clues as to how he will fill it. On this latter point, the early evidence is that he will fill it vigorously rather than passively and that, at his relatively youthful age, he is determined to make his mark in national science affairs. Significantly, upon accepting the appointment, he resigned from Bell, which was a matter of choice rather than necessity. All of his predecessors went on leave from their universities when they took the job, except for DuBridge, who retired after a long career as president of California Institute of Technology.

As for the genesis of his appointment: David was picked by members of President Nixon's personal staff without consultation with the then-incumbent, Lee A. DuBridge. DuBridge had indicated a wish to retire before September 1971, when he will be 70. But, more important, both for the timing and the selection process, the White House staff felt little confidence in the manner in which DuBridge ran the Office of Science and Technology (OST) and its surrounding committees and advisory groups. Justifiably or not, Nixon's immediate staff held the OST operation responsible for a series of politically painful matters, ranging from allegedly poor advice on the selection of appointees for high federal research positions to the general impression that budgetary niggardliness under Nixon was seriously injuring American science. It was also noted that DuBridge had lost contact with important elements of his own constituency, notably an influential segment of PSAC which felt that he had violated PSAC etiquette by voluntarily speaking out in support of the administration's position on the antiballistic missile. Furthermore, long memories on the Nixon staff observed that PSAC included several regular or associate members who were deeply involved in organizing the scientific community against Nixon in the 1960 election. (DuBridge identifies himself as a Republican but has never been involved in party affairs.) Among this enduring group of advisers was one who, when in the employ of the Eisenhower administration, flatly rejected a suggestion that he assist Nixon's 1960 campaign for the presidency. And here, 10 years later, it was noted by some of those who had labored to bring Nixon to the presidency, a number of these one-time anti-Nixon activists were still trooping into the White House as policy advisers. Metaphysicians of science policy inevitably applaud this continuity as evidence of a sound system for procuring the best scientific and technical advice, regardless of party considerations. And perhaps it is. But for veterans of Nixon's Long March, it was somewhere between incredible and deplorable.

In this context, there was no inclination to ask the White House science advisory apparatus to assist in finding a successor when it was time for DuBridge to go. Conducted by Nixon's staff, the search turned toward various individuals who had come to the attention of the White House in the course of a search for talent after the new administration took office. Now, just who it was that had put in the name of Edward E. David, Jr., is not certain, but it was virtually certain that his name would turn up on the list of prospective recruits for high scientific or technical positions. First, David met the minimum requirement of being a Republican, though, like DuBridge, his party relationship was nominal. Equally important, however, David was a star member of that esteemed collection of talent known as Bell Telephone Laboratories, which, for at least a quarter of a century, has always had one or another of its top executives closely associated with the government's most important scientific and technical activities. As one longtime academic science adviser observed, "There is no organization, academic or industrial, that can match Bell for the length of its high-level connections in Washington." At the beginning of World War II, for example, Bell president Frank B. Jewett, who was also president of the National Academy of Sciences, helped organize the wartime research effort. His successor, J. B. Fisk, was chief of research for the Atomic Energy Commission during the critical early post-war years, chaired the U.S. technical delegation to the Geneva Test Ban Conference in 1958, and also served on PSAC until 1960. B. McMillan, Bell's vice president on military systems, was undersecretary of the Air Force from 1963 to 1965; W. O. Baker, Bell's vice president for research, is enmeshed in government advisory bodies, ranging from PSAC to the Liaison Committee for Science and Technology of the Library of Congress.

Which, if any, of these suggested David's name to the White House is not known, but the most frequent guess is that it came from Baker.

As early as last May, David held conversations with members of the

AAAS Won't Absorb Science Service

The AAAS directors, at their regular quarterly meeting this past weekend, decided not to use AAAS funds to bail out financially troubled Science Service Inc. Instead, the directors offered to provide "consultation and management services" under contract if Science Service desires such help.

The action fell far short of the assistance sought by the nonprofit publishing organization, which is probably best known for its popularized weekly magazine, *Science News*, and for its conduct of the annual Science Talent Search, sponsored by the Westinghouse Educational Foundation. Science Service, whose board includes many distinguished scientists, has operated for roughly half a century, but in recent years deficits have soared to the point where the organization's continued existence is threatened (see *Science*, 18 September). According to records filed with the Internal Revenue Service, Science Service reported losses of $45,540, $189,609, $208,498, and $365,371 in the four successive fiscal years ending 31 March 1969. The records also show that Science Service has been selling off assets to make ends meet. Records for the most recent fiscal year are not available, but Science Service is said to have cut its deficit to around $100,000 for fiscal 1970. Moreover, rigorous economy measures are said to have brought the organization close to the break-even point in recent months.

In an effort to gain enough financial backing to survive the current crisis and to allow room for future expansion, Science Service appealed to the AAAS to merge or otherwise assume its financial obligations. That hope was dashed this past weekend when the AAAS directors voted down a proposal "that the AAAS accept the assets, liabilities and responsibilities of Science Service" and commit up to $500,000 for that purpose from AAAS resources. Unwilling to turn their backs completely on troubled colleagues, however, the directors expressed their willingness "to accept from Science Service a contract for one year to provide consultation and management services to be negotiated." The board charged its chairman "to ensure that AAAS does not incur liability for the debts of Science Service" and urged him to complete contract negotiations "at the earliest possible time." Board members are said to have felt sympathy with Science Service's efforts to reach the young and the lay public, but a majority of the board felt that the organization's precarious finances might prove an endless drain on the AAAS treasury.—P.M.B.

White House staff, though apparently there was neither a job offer nor even a mention of any particular position. It is not clear just what it was that suddenly precipitated the decision leading to DuBridge's departure, but late in July David was asked whether he would take the job of White House science adviser. David says that, before he accepted, he discussed the job with several "key people" in the White House. "If I hadn't been assured of their support," he said in an interview with *Science*, "I wouldn't have taken the job. I said to the White House people that I wouldn't take the job to downgrade science. I was satisfied after talking cold turkey that they agreed."

David warmly praises his predecessor for leaving him what he describes as a "solid foundation" and also for having done "a terrific job of educating people about problems of science policy." He rejects the widely held view that under DuBridge the office declined in influence and that DuBridge was, in effect, suddenly eased out. But there are those in a position to know who say that plans for David's hiring and DuBridge's departure were simultaneously disclosed to DuBridge by the White House staff and that the affront was then diplomatically papered over with an effusively worded, publicly released "Dear Lee" letter from Nixon.

In any case, with the change announced 19 August, David proceeded toward his new post in a fashion which indicates that he realized that his appointment broke with tradition and that it would be desirable quickly to establish links with the various persons and organizations that have been important in the affairs of the office he heads. As he put it, "I made sure I had contact with the constituencies." One of David's first steps was to get together with past presidential science advisers, in a meeting held at his doctoral alma mater, M.I.T., and hosted by Eisenhower's first fulltime science adviser, M.I.T. board chairman James R. Killian, Jr. Among those present were George Kistiakowsky, the Harvard chemist, who also served under Eisenhower; Jerome B. Wiesner, M.I.T. provost, who was Kennedy's adviser; and Donald F. Hornig, president of Brown University, who served Kennedy and Johnson. The only occupant of the office not present was DuBridge, the explanation being that he and David had held conversations earlier. David also met with the Council of the National Academy of Sciences (he is a member of both the NAS and the National Academy of Engineering). Meetings were also held with PSAC and several of its advisory panels.

Though it might be expected that some old-time members of the advisory system would feel chagrined by David's appointment, the fact is that, even in conditions of strict anonymity, there seems to be a good deal of confidence in the choice. One reason is that David's professional ability is held in high regard. Another is that few of the old-timers feel at home with the Nixon administration, but they feel rapport with David and believe, or at least hope, that he can provide the link that has been missing between science and government since Nixon took office.

David is going about his duties in a quiet but apparently surefooted way. There are reports that since he took office a formal understanding has been reached under which OST will automatically be consulted by the Office of Management and Budget on matters concerning science, technology, and many educational affairs. It is known that under DuBridge the consultative process was considerably diminished. David simply says, "We've worked out some understandings, but essentially it's a process that depends on confidence and good relations. We'll have to see how it works." Others say, however, that the understandings are specifically embodied in a memorandum and that David took the job only after it was agreed that his office would be given

an opportunity to play a role in the formulation of budgets.

David said that he considers "high priority" problems to include unemployment in the aerospace industry, "gyrations" in support of basic research, the relationship between biomedical research and medical service, and national energy needs. "But you know," he said, "we don't control events here. We're in a position to take a broad view and to make recommendations to people who do. But I'm not sounding off on anything until I know my way around a good deal better. What I can say is that I took this job with the assurance that there is backing in the White House for doing a lot of things that are necessary for improving our science and technology and for making use of them for national needs. There is a real willingness to do what is necessary." David added that he sees himself dealing with four constituencies: the science and engineering communities, the White House staff, the government research organizations, and the public. "But I'm not here as a lobbyist for any of them. I'm here, in my view of it, to provide the best advice available concerning the problems that come under this office."

Considering the political preoccupation of the Nixon administration, and the budgetary pressures that restrict its choices, it is doubtful that the relatively obscure Office of Science and Technology can become a central point for re-ordering priorities to the satisfaction of any of David's constituencies. Not even a blend of Fermi and Talleyrand could do that from the slim power base that is OST. But 3 hours of conversation with David, plus the recollections of people who know him, do not suggest that he came to Washington to sink out of sight passively.

—D. S. GREENBERG

Cyclamates: House Report Charges Administrative Alchemy at HEW

At a Saturday morning press conference in October 1969, Robert Finch, then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, announced that cyclamate artificial sweeteners—which Americans were consuming at the rate of 16 million pounds per year—had been found to cause cancer in rats and would no longer be sold as foods. Following Finch's announcement HEW established regulations permitting the sale of foods containing cyclamates as nonprescription drugs; but this decision was reversed in August of this year, and all sales of cyclamates were banned.

This curious series of events led the House Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee, headed by Representative L. H. Fountain (D–N.C.), which has long been critical of both HEW and the Food and Drug Administration, to investigate the regulation of cyclamates. The subcommittee's report,* released last week, provides some interesting insights into the administration of FDA and its parent organization, HEW.

Cyclamates were first marketed in the early 1950's, but their use, like that of saccharin, was confined to diet foods used mainly by diabetics and severely obese persons. In 1958, on the basis of early clinical trials and their limited use, cyclamates were placed on the Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list of products so that no restrictions were imposed on their use.

About 1960 cyclamate consumption soared, mainly because of clever marketing techniques of soft drink companies. The subcommittee's report notes that, at the time of their increasing popularity, cyclamates had not been subjected to the rigorous screening tests that normally would have been applied to a food additive consumed in large quantities by healthy people.

A series of studies, many of them financed by the sugar industry, revealed a variety of possibly harmful effects of cyclamates. At hearings on cyclamates before Fountain's subcommittee testimony revealed that, as early as 1962 and increasingly after 1962, the FDA had reason to believe that cyclamates were not generally recognized as safe. FDA officials testified that, indeed, cyclamates should have been removed from the GRAS list long before they had been, but offered no explanations.

Cyclamates finally were removed from the GRAS list by Finch—not the FDA—when cancer was added to the list of possible side effects. Rats fed high doses of cyclamates at Abbott Laboratories, the principal manufacturer of the artificial sweeteners, developed a rare type of kidney tumor. This result, later confirmed in FDA and other laboratories with much lower doses of cyclamates, forced HEW to invoke the 1958 Delaney Amendment to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, which prohibits the sale of any food component shown to cause cancer in man or animals. There is still no evidence that cyclamates cause cancer in humans.

Finch, according to the Fountain report, did not want to eliminate the sale of products containing cyclamates completely, and he announced at the October press conference that cyclamates would remain available to people with such conditions as obesity and diabetes.

One can only speculate on Finch's reasons for stating unequivocally at that time that these products would continue to be sold. An FDA official mentioned in his testimony before the Fountain subcommittee that California fruit growers had just completed the canning season at that time and that a significant portion of fruit had been canned with cyclamates, but the subcommittee's report does not mention this factor. A few months after the cyclamate ban, the Washington *Post* reported that HEW was planning a legislative strategy for the elimination of the Delaney Amendment.

After Finch made his announcement in October, HEW convened an ad hoc Medical Advisory Group on Cyclamates, and after studying the available data the advisory group suggested that cyclamates remain available to people with conditions such as obesity and diabetes, the course of action that Finch had already stated would be followed.

FDA was then asked to find some

* Copies of both the Report on the Regulation of Cyclamate Sweeteners and the transcript of the Hearings on Cyclamate Sweeteners which preceded the report can be obtained free of charge from the House of Representatives, Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, Washington, D.C. 20515.