

Commerce Department: Myron Tribus, Top Science Official, Resigns

The furor over Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel's ouster last week ensured that the quiet departure of Commerce Department assistant secretary for science and technology Myron Tribus would go even more quietly. Tribus, who resigned on short notice, indicated he is leaving Washington more in disappointment than in anger.

Tribus says that current public attitudes toward technology and an unsympathetic congressional reception made it "difficult to take the initiatives that the country needs." He was also pretty obviously chagrined that, as environmental and consumer issues grew more important, the jurisdiction of the Commerce Department on these issues was cut back and the scope and authority of his own office were sharply reduced.

Tribus says that he felt that environmental and consumer-protection problems were important Commerce Department concerns when he joined the Administration. "I thought the job would be central to those kinds of problems," says Tribus, "and I've regarded it as so, but I don't think the rest of government has. In a nutshell, that's why I'm leaving."

Tribus accepted what he describes as a "fine offer" to join Xerox as vice president for research and development of its business products division in Rochester, a newly created position.

Tribus explains his abrupt departure—he cleaned out his desk even before the White House announced his resignation let alone found a successor—in terms of the lack of effectiveness of the lame duck who stays on the scene.

Tribus was the third occupant of the assistant secretary's post created in 1963 at a time when federal departments and agencies were adding science advisers to their hierarchies and reorganizing scientific and technical activities. The first incumbent was J. Herbert Holloman, who came to Commerce from a top General Electric research management job and moved into the first science post with sub-cabinet rank in an old-line federal department.

The Commerce Department in the

formative days of federal science harbored the Bureau of Standards, Weather Bureau, Census Bureau, and Patent Office and could therefore claim one of the rare reservoirs of technical talent in government. But pursuit of its major mission—promotion of the full development of the economic resources of the nation—earned Commerce a reputation as the representative of industry and business in government just as the Labor Department has been viewed as a representative of the labor unions. The traditional Commerce operations have not shown much dynamism and, in fact, the spirit of Calvin Coolidge seems to walk many of the dim corridors in the aging Commerce building on Constitution Avenue. The mood among members of the science and technology cadre therefore has often matched in color the blue carpet in the executive suite Tribus has just vacated.

Holloman held the assistant secretaryship for 5 years and in the first 2 or 3 years contrived to effect some substantial managerial and organizational changes in the Bureau of Standards and the Patent Office and to establish a departmental Office of Science and Technology to oversee technical operations under him. His aggressiveness and self-confidence antagonized



Myron Tribus

some of those he dealt with in Congress and in other agencies at first, but he later succeeded in establishing generally good relations on Capitol Hill and "downtown." The exception was in Holloman's dealings with Representative John J. Rooney (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee which handles the Commerce Department budget. Rooney played a key role in sinking Holloman's pet proposal for a civilian technology program to assist technological upgrading in business and industry and in seeing that Holloman got half a loaf in the State Technical Services program enacted in 1965.

Rooney proved to be Tribus's nemesis also. The New York congressman narrowly escaped defeat in a primary election this year, but was reelected in November, and Tribus leaves little doubt that he found the prospect of dealing with Rooney in the next Congress discouraging. Tribus says that he unsuccessfully sought a personal meeting with Rooney for 10 months after he got to Washington. Tribus adds that he finally encountered Rooney by accident on a plane trip and had a pleasant chat with the congressman, but he felt he made no progress in explaining his office's plans and problems.

During his 18 months on the job, Tribus has seen a number of decisions diminish Commerce Department sovereignty or the authority of his own office. The State Technical Services program, designed to help small industry apply new technology, was wiped out mainly on Rooney's initiative (*Science*, 26 December 1969). Tribus's own fief was drastically reduced when the Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) with 10,000 employees was transferred to the newly created National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), which will be located in Commerce but will have an administrator of its own. The same reorganization plan which established NOAA provided for creation of an independent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in which is centered authority for administration of water quality and air pollution control legislation. Tribus was one of those under consideration for the post of Administrator of EPA, and what may have been the last straw for Tribus was the naming of William D. Ruckelshaus, an assistant attorney general, as EPA's top man. It seems likely that Tribus's identification with the Department of Commerce worked against

him, since environmental critics might have been expected to react unfavorably if the EPA top official came from Commerce.

Tribus obviously feels that the appointment of a Justice Department man to head EPA will influence its outlook and says he thinks it is a "mistake to convert EPA into an enforcement agency." He adds that he regrets "it is necessary to go several levels down in the new agency before you find technical expertise." He also notes that the administrator's job at NOAA is still open and he hopes the person chosen will be "technically qualified."

This is clearly a sore point with Tribus. In civilian agencies, says Tribus, "There are no significant jobs in the government outside space, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Bureau of Standards where line authority—what is called 'clout'—is held by technical people. In this town they're ultimately going to have to face this question. Scientists, engineers, and technical people are dealt out."

Tribus, who was dean of the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth before joining the Administration and who did consulting and held business directorships while an academic, sees political expediency in some requirements of recent antipollution legislation but hardly fits the mold of an apologist for business.

In speeches and in private conversations he has criticized industry leaders, who he says in many cases are incapable of dealing with environmental problems. "They don't really understand the technical content of problems." For example, Tribus says that "economists have a distorted view of the costs of antipollution devices." The economists, he says, simply add the cost of antipollution technology to production costs, and business executives accept this practice. Tribus feels that it is necessary to "dig more deeply into industrial processes." He says there is a lot of what he calls "slop," that is, inefficiencies in many systems, and that it should be possible to cut pollution and increase efficiency without incurring devastating increases in costs.

Tribus, of course, has won some as well as lost some. He feels good progress was made in weather modification research under his chairmanship of the Interagency Committee on Atmospheric Science. He is credited with getting standards on flammable fabrics pushed through rapidly. And his office

has acquired new responsibility for research and for assessing needs and projecting demands in telecommunications.

Tribus, nevertheless, fits the part of the frustrated technocrat. He insists, however, he is not angry at anyone. "I don't want to slam the door. I have a lot of respect for civil servants and I understand the constraints on public officials."

APPOINTMENTS



R. W. Lyman



J. L. Gibbs, Jr.

At Stanford University, **Richard W. Lyman**, acting president to president; and **James L. Gibbs, Jr.**, professor of anthropology, to dean of undergraduate studies. . . . **Jack K. Williams**, vice president for academic affairs, University of Tennessee, to president, Texas A&M University system. . . . **Robert G. Chollar**, a vice president of the National Cash Register Company, to full-time president, Charles F. Kettering Foundation and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. . . . **James A. Perkins**, executive director, Center for Educational Inquiry, to chairman of the board and chief executive officer, International Council for Educational Development. . . . **Walter Williams**, director for research development, National Planning Association, to director of research, Institute of Governmental Research, University of Washington. . . . **Louis Kaufman**, dean, School of Business Administration, California State Polytechnic College, to president, Los Angeles City College. . . . **Marlan Blissett**, assistant professor of political science, Purdue University, to acting director, science and public policy program, at the university. . . . At the University of Illinois Medical Center, Chicago, **Carl Cohen**, professor of genetics, to director of the new Center for Genetics; and **Truman O. Anderson**, associate professor of medicine and microbiology, to dean, School of Basic Medical Sciences. . . . **L. H. Lange**, chairman, mathematics department, San

Jose State College, to dean, School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the college. . . . **Herbert L. Toor**, head, chemical engineering, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Carnegie-Mellon University, to dean, Carnegie Institute of Technology. . . . **William H. Dennen**, chairman, geology department, University of Kentucky, to acting dean, Graduate School at the university. . . . **Rubin Bressler**, chairman of pharmacology and clinical pharmacology, Duke University, to chairman, pharmacology department, University of Arizona. . . . **John M. Crothers**, director, University of Tennessee-Memphis State University Center for Advanced Graduate Study, Memphis, to chairman, education department, University of Tennessee, Nashville. . . . **Abbott L. Ferriss**, research sociologist, Russell Sage Foundation, to chairman, sociology department, Emory University. . . . **Fred M. Gardner**, vice president and treasurer, Hi Tech Industries, Inc., Conn., to chairman, physics department, University of Hartford. . . . **Eugene B. Skolnikoff**, visiting research scholar in Geneva at the European Centre of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to head, political science department, M.I.T. . . . **James E. Eckenhoff**, chairman, anesthesia department, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, to dean of the school. . . . At the University of Missouri, Rolla, **Harold Q. Fuller**, chairman, physics department, to dean, College of Arts and Sciences; and **Robert J. Bell**, associate professor of physics, to chairman, physics department. . . . **Julius R. Krevans**, dean for academic affairs, Johns Hopkins University, to dean, School of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco. . . . **Laurence Bellagamba**, professor of education, Montclair State College, to dean of education at the college. . . . **Anson R. Bertrand**, chairman, agronomy department, University of Georgia, to dean, College of Agricultural Sciences, Texas Technological University. . . . **Daniel K. Bloomfield**,