

AAAS Presidency: Controversy Flares over Seaborg Candidacy

The election of AAAS officers is traditionally a placid affair that causes little excitement even within the association itself. The recent pattern has been that two candidates are nominated for each vacancy to be filled, there is little or no electioneering on behalf of the various candidates, and the names which are best known to the approximately 530 voting members of the AAAS governing Council garner the most votes and are genteelly ushered into office.

But this year the election has not followed the traditional script. An unusual behind-the-scenes tug-of-war developed over the slating of Glenn T. Seaborg, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), as a candidate for president-elect of the AAAS. The struggle ultimately became so heated that it burst into the public press across the nation.

The struggle first came to wide public attention in a front-page story in the *Washington Post* on Sunday, 29 November. The article, which was headlined "Scientists Split by Seaborg Candidacy," stated that: "The largest and most powerful scientific organization in the United States is at bitter odds with itself over whether its next president should be Glenn T. Seaborg, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission." The article went on to assert that "dissident directors" of the AAAS had called for Seaborg to withdraw but that Seaborg had declined. The article also said that reporters for *Science* had prepared an article on the controversy which editor Philip H. Abelson refused to run, an incident which led to the resignation of Daniel S. Greenberg as news editor of this magazine.

The story, which by its nature involved elements of conflict, almost inevitably attracted attention throughout the country. By the end of last week articles had either appeared in, or been prepared for, *Newsweek* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and vari-

ous science-oriented magazines, among others. The tone of much of the coverage was somewhat negative toward the AAAS. Probably the most vitriolic attack—one which AAAS officials consider highly inaccurate and inflammatory—was made by syndicated columnist Milton Viorst in an article in the 3 December *Washington Star* that was headlined "Science Association's Internal Rot."

Why Controversy Developed

What had the AAAS done to merit such a bitter attack? Why was the normally obscure AAAS elections process suddenly dragged into the glare of public exposure? The answers appear to lie largely in the changing nature of the AAAS and in new attitudes that have developed among some AAAS leaders concerning the social responsibilities of the scientific community. As a result of these changing attitudes, an internal controversy developed on the AAAS board of directors as to whether it was appropriate to slate a high government official as a candidate for the top office of an independent organization like the AAAS.

The controversy led board chairman H. Bentley Glass to take the extraordinary step of visiting Seaborg to describe the concerns of board members. Ten years ago almost no one would have thought to question the appropriateness of slating an eminent Nobel laureate such as Seaborg. But today, the fact that Seaborg heads a controversial agency that is identified in the public mind with nuclear pollution and the manufacture of atomic bombs caused many directors to have qualms. None of the opposition to Seaborg seems to have been directed at him personally, but rather at the possibility of a conflict between his roles as AEC chairman and as possible head of the AAAS.

After the controversy developed on the board, the news section of this magazine prepared an article outlining the situation and urged that it be run in timely fashion so as to alert the

electorate to the nature of the issues involved in the election. Editor Abelson declined to publish the article, largely on the grounds that to do so would constitute "meddling" in the electoral processes of the association in the waning days of the mail balloting. However, two factors have since led Abelson to conclude that an article would now be appropriate. For one thing, the controversy has received such wide public notice that an accurate account of all that transpired seems desirable. For another thing, the balloting ended on 10 December, the day before this issue was released, thus eliminating any question of "meddling" in the election. The winners of the various electoral contests will be announced at a Council meeting in Chicago on 30 December. At stake are seats on the board of directors and on the Committee on Council Affairs, as well as the presidency-elect.

In the contest for president-elect—the lowest rung on the 3-year AAAS presidential succession—Seaborg is opposed by Richard H. Bolt, chairman of the board of Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc., a Cambridge, Mass., consulting firm. Bolt is a distinguished acoustical physicist who has played an important role in AAAS affairs in recent years. He has been active on the board of directors and on the AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare. He is also the author of an ambitious resolution, which has been approved by the board and by Council, to expand the association's membership by an order of magnitude and to increase the scale and effectiveness of its work on contemporary problems. The winner of the Seaborg-Bolt contest will become president-elect in January 1971, then president in January 1972, then retiring president and chairman of the board of directors in January 1973.

How Nominations Were Made

Seaborg and Bolt were originally asked to run for president-elect by the AAAS Committee on Nominations and Elections, which is responsible, under the AAAS constitution, for nominating candidates. That committee is primarily a creature of the AAAS governing Council, a 530-member body consisting largely of representatives of the AAAS affiliated societies. The nominating committee currently includes four representatives of Council and three members of the board; it is chaired by

NEWS IN BRIEF

● SCIENCE CURRICULUM

GRANTS: The National Science Foundation has announced the award of \$14,474,134 to 657 colleges and universities under its institutional grants for science programs. The grants range from \$1,000 to \$142,756. A grant is based on the amount of federal research awards received by an institution in fiscal year 1969.

● **COMPUTER LIBRARY:** The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has received \$400,000 from the Council of Library Resources to conduct a 1-year experiment in a computer-based library system. Known as Intrex (for Information Transfer Experiments), the system employs remote display consoles connected to a central computer which contains detailed cross references to thousands of scientific articles. The consoles will also display the full text of selected articles. Studies for the system were initiated at MIT 5 years ago. Additional support for design and development of Intrex has come from the National Science Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Independence Foundation.

● **NEW PUBLICATIONS:** *Science Council Report No. 10—Canada, Science and the Oceans* by the Science Council of Canada outlines a major program for Canadian marine science and technology and may be had for 75 cents from Information Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. *Waste Management Concepts for the Coastal Zone*, a report by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering is available for \$3.50 from the Printing and Publishing Office, NAS-NAE, 2101 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20418. *Ecosphere* is a worldwide environmental news bulletin published bimonthly by the newly formed International Ecological University, a Berkeley environmental action and education organization. Subscriptions are \$4 and may be obtained from IEU, 300 Eshleman Hall, University of California, Berkeley 94720. *How Medical Students Finance Their Education*, Public Health Service publication No. 1336-1, contains results of a 1967-68 survey and is for sale for \$1 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402.

Athelstan Spilhaus, the current president of AAAS.

Some persuasion was apparently required to get Seaborg to allow his name to be put forward. Seaborg had previously been asked to run for AAAS office in 1963 and again in 1968 (he was AEC chairman in both those years, too), but each time he had declined, citing the press of other duties. In an interview with *Science*, Seaborg said that when he was asked again this year to run for AAAS office he accepted because it would have been "embarrassing or awkward to turn them down a third time" and because he felt he could "adjust my schedule and take on a role at AAAS, if elected." In the opinion of Spilhaus, who is Seaborg's most fervent supporter among AAAS board members, Seaborg was honoring the association and doing it a service by agreeing to allow his name to be put in nomination. "He needs the presidency of the AAAS like he needs a hole in the head," Spilhaus said.

The question of a conflict between Seaborg's AEC duties and his possible AAAS role seems to have been given only slight attention by the nominating committee. Two participants in the committee's 22 June meeting, at which candidates were slated, recall that the question was briefly raised as to whether it was "appropriate" to slate a high government official, but there was little or no discussion and none of the participants indicated much concern over the matter. Nor did Seaborg himself—though he was well aware that he would remain at the AEC for another 5 years—give much thought to the possibility of a conflict. "It didn't occur to me at all—it just didn't occur to me as the remotest possibility," he recalls. Seaborg believes he can resolve any conflict which does arise in "the usual fashion" by absenting himself from discussions and by abstaining from voting on matters that involve the AEC.

Opposition to Seaborg's candidacy does not seem to have developed until after the nominations were publicly announced in the AAAS *Bulletin*, which was mailed to some 130,000 members in September. Several weeks went by with no visible sign of protest against Seaborg's candidacy, but then a highly charged discussion of the implications took place at the board's meeting in October and continued in subsequent informal conversations among board members. One informed count indi-

cates that 11 of the 13 board members have, at one time or another, expressed some degree of concern over Seaborg's candidacy. The spectrum of concern ranged from an opinion that Seaborg should be asked to withdraw to a feeling that he should at least be apprised of the board's concerns so that he could think about the implications of his candidacy. Three board members felt strongly enough to write letters to the board chairman contending the inappropriateness of slating Seaborg. Though the board has no official role in the elections process, the upshot of the board's discussions was that H. Bentley Glass, board chairman, visited Seaborg on 3 November to describe the board's thinking. The discussion was general, and Glass made no formal request that Seaborg drop out of the election race.

Seaborg later told *Science* he "felt at a loss" after Glass's visit because "no names were identified as opposed to my candidacy and no numbers were identified—it was not clear whether one or two board members were concerned or virtually the entire board." Seaborg subsequently consulted with Spilhaus, the head of the committee that had nominated him, and Spilhaus unequivocally urged Seaborg to stay in the race. "I counseled Glenn on no account to withdraw," Spilhaus recalls, "not merely because the nominating committee thought he'd make a splendid president, but also because his withdrawal at that late stage [the ballots were about to be mailed out] would have caused tremendous turmoil." Spilhaus said he also resented the fact that board members were "interfering with the Council's prerogatives" by trying to "manipulate" the election even though the board as such has no official role in the elections process and is not supposed to be self-perpetuating. "Those board members gave themselves a terrible black eye," Spilhaus believes. Ultimately Seaborg, yielding to the urgings of Spilhaus, decided to leave his name in nomination, and the ballots were sent out on 10 November.

Just what were the issues that had the board so upset? For the most part, they involved the possibility that Seaborg's AEC position might interfere with the ability of the AAAS to play a role in public affairs that involve the AEC.

Those who oppose the slating of Seaborg, for example, note that the AAAS Committee on Environmental

Alteration is launching a study of the impact of power plants on the environment—a subject that is apt to necessitate making judgments on the AEC's standards for nuclear power plants. They also note that the AAAS has been asked by Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) to adjudicate charges that the AEC has harassed two dissident scientists, John Gofman and Arthur Tamplin. Though the AAAS has not yet decided whether it should accept such a judicial role, the potential for conflict between the AAAS and the AEC on a number of fronts, particularly as the AAAS expands its public affairs activities and as the AEC becomes increasingly subject to public attack, troubles some board members. They worry not only that Seaborg, being human, might somehow try to influence the AAAS in its handling of AEC matters, but also that Seaborg's mere presence at the head of the AAAS might cast a cloud of suspicion on the objectivity of certain AAAS studies even if Seaborg scrupulously absented himself from any participation.

Seaborg's Defenders

Seaborg's supporters, on the other hand, believe the likelihood of a conflict of interest has been blown way out of proportion. They believe he is a man of such unquestioned integrity that he will easily be able to avoid any conflicts that might arise. And they suggest that Seaborg's AEC role might actually serve a useful purpose—by enhancing the ability of the AAAS to affect AEC policies.

Seaborg's supporters also note that the AAAS has confronted similar conflict-of-interest problems in the past and seems to have surmounted them. The late Alan T. Waterman, for example, served as president of the AAAS while he was director of the National Science Foundation. Waterman accepted the AAAS presidency after gaining assurances that neither the AAAS board nor the NSF's governing National Science Board considered his dual role a serious conflict of interest. Similarly, Wallace R. Brode served as AAAS president while he was also science adviser to the Secretary of State. "You can't indict everybody in government," says Spilhaus. "You can dream up possible conflicts for anyone who has the stature to be president of the AAAS. If you exclude everyone from business, government, and academic science who might conceivably have a conflict, you

end up with nincompoops who have never said anything about anything."

There is similar disagreement as to how Seaborg's leadership of the AAAS (should he win the election) would affect recently launched efforts to recruit a broader, and younger, AAAS membership. Seaborg's opponents note that the public in general, and young people in particular, are increasingly suspicious of any "interlocking directorships" between government and private organizations—a fact which might tend to drive potential members away from an organization headed by an AEC official. Seaborg's supporters, on the other hand, believe his immense prestige and his long interest in youth affairs might well attract new members.

There is also disagreement concerning two other possible conflicts. On one matter, Seaborg's opponents claim he is so heavily committed elsewhere that he will have little time to devote to AAAS activities. Seaborg's supporters, on the other hand, say that when he takes on an activity he devotes great energy to it. On the second matter, Seaborg's opponents note that Seaborg is chairman of the board of Science Service, which has been trying—thus far unsuccessfully—to merge with AAAS. Should merger talk revive, they say, Seaborg might be the head of both parties to the talks. However, Seaborg's supporters regard the Science Service merger question as a dead issue. And they note that, in any case, Seaborg will have but one vote on a 13-member board that includes 11 voting members—hardly enough to sway any particular issue by himself.

Debate over Whether to Publish

Behind the major issue of whether Seaborg is or is not an appropriate candidate for AAAS office, there developed a second issue concerning whether the matter should be discussed in the pages of *Science*. The controversy over Seaborg had come to the attention of the news section of this magazine and an article was prepared describing the flurry of activity on the board and the issues that had developed in the election. Editor Abelson declined to publish the article, as noted above, lest the magazine seem to be "meddling" in the election. Abelson pointed out that the electorate had already been sent biographies of the candidates, and he said it was "no secret" that Seaborg had been on the AEC for a decade. He also said that

members of the electorate had had access to previous articles in *Science* concerning the controversy between the AEC and Gofman-Tamplin, and concerning the proposed merger between the AAAS and Science Service—thus the electorate could be considered already informed on the subject of some of the alleged conflicts. Furthermore, Abelson said, any directors who were opposed to Seaborg should organize a campaign and contact the voting members by mail instead of attempting to "use" *Science* for their own political purposes. "To run a story calling attention to an alleged conflict of interest at the last moment while the election was in process was simply improper," Abelson said.

However, Greenberg and his associates in the news department took the position that the issue was of fundamental importance to the electorate and should be publicized. When Abelson declined to authorize publication, Greenberg resigned in protest and announced plans to publish an independent newsletter on science and government affairs (see *Science*, 4 December, p. 1060). Greenberg subsequently described his position as follows:

"This news department has always proceeded from the principle that secrecy is anathema to the well-being of the scientific community. It is impossible to make a rational case for bending this principle to serve the interests of a narrow segment of the community, no matter how well-intentioned the motive or how well-connected that segment. The membership and Council of the AAAS had a right to be informed—prior to the election—of the AAAS board's concern about the Seaborg candidacy. The board, in fact, was so concerned that it delegated its chairman to discuss the matter with Seaborg. It was the duty of this magazine to convey this information, not only so that the Council members might weigh it in casting their votes, but also so that the rank and file of the AAAS might make its views known to the Council members who represent them. To have done so would have been a valuable contribution to the electoral process."

What effect the controversy would have on Seaborg's relations with the board and his ability to lead the AAAS, should he win the election, is not clear. Seaborg is obviously somewhat surprised by the storm that has blown up over his nomination, and he is appar-

ently not certain in his own mind whether he should accept the AAAS presidency if he wins it. In a statement to *Science*, he said: "In determining my course of action with respect to the presidency of the AAAS, I shall try to ascertain what is best for the AAAS with the help of conversations with people on both sides of the controversy.

I am seriously concerned that there be some semblance of adherence to the democratic process. We must note that the Council will express its preference with the full knowledge that I have served for nearly 10 years and am continuing to serve as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. If I am defeated, the matter will be settled. If

I am elected by a decisive margin, this should be taken into account." That statement indicated that Seaborg is still struggling over the question of whether he would make an appropriate leader of the AAAS. "I'm going to talk to more people," he said. "I really want to do what's right for AAAS."

—PHILIP M. BOFFEY

2. Arts and Humanities: Federal Money Is Benefiting Culture

The National Endowment for the Humanities has the twofold mission of upgrading the quality of humanistic endeavor and laying open its riches to the general public.

Former president of Brown University Barnaby Keeney, chairman of the endowment until President Nixon's refusal to reappoint him last July, remains its most outspoken representative. Keeney feels that humanists have lost sight of what he considers their proper role, namely, that of interpreting the past so that man may live more wisely and happily in the present. He thinks that the humanities have been in danger of becoming an intellectual retreat rather than a living force, and that humanists have been delinquent in helping people formulate new values to deal with the consequences of advances in science and technology.

In a 1969 speech, for example, Keeney declared: "Strenuous and occasionally successful efforts are being made to apply the social sciences, but almost never are the humanities well applied. We do not use philosophy in defining our conduct. We do not use literature as a source of real and vicarious experience to save us the trouble of living every life again in our own."

The most visible signs of the disparity between government support for science and the humanities are found in aid to higher education. In 1965, of all federal money for research, less than one-half percent went to humanities, with the result that the proportion of humanities scholars to science scholars declined drastically in postgraduate education programs (*Science*, 1 October 1965). The effect of this bias is seen

on campuses throughout the country, where humanities classes are often housed in shabby edifices abandoned by science departments when they moved to shiny new government-funded facilities.

The endowment directs its beneficence into four categories—fellowships and stipends for individual scholars; research and publication; the upgrading of humanities education; and a public program, whose broad mandate is to get the grass roots excited about the joys of knowledge.

While individual research and scholarship grants are awarded for many kinds of activities, from underwater archeological excavation to a study of the philosophy of law, the humanities council has tried to favor studies that will stimulate thought on civilization's current afflictions. The stress on "relevance" has produced some dismay in scholarly quarters where there was fear that pure research was being downgraded. But the objections have apparently been dispelled. When asked recently what the endowment's greatest accomplishment had been, Keeney replied: "It's gotten the humanists to think of something besides pure research." The endowment started out by handing over 80 percent of its budget for individual study and research. Now, with priorities shifting to education and public programs, the proportion is down to 35 percent.

The most adventurous and least clearly defined of the programs is the one for public consumption. It has two basic thrusts: one deals through the media, primarily in the form of educational television programs; the

other involves direct confrontations between the humanities and The People. In the latter category, the centerpiece is the National Humanities Series. Organized with grants to the Woodrow Wilson Scholarship Foundation, the series sends teams of actors and teachers to interested communities whose cultural facilities are limited. Under the general heading of "Time Out for Man: The Humanities in Action," the teams stage lively public productions, which feature the writings of history's great thinkers, around themes of current public concern. After the performance, discussions are held between the audience and those on stage. The performers have reportedly been enthusiastically received, and some communities have become excited enough to form groups to foster more such activities.

The aim of the public program is to build on the resources of all the local institutions it can get its hands on—museums, libraries, schools, adult education centers, historical societies, radio and TV stations, and newspapers. A pilot program in Utah, for example, provides for a humanities agent (modeled on the lines of an agriculture extension agent) to aid statewide agencies in designing programs related to local history and culture, and to engender cooperation between public schools and local historical societies.

The endowment's education program is largely concerned with aiding in the development of humanities curricula. Colleges and universities have received the most attention, but the most novel program may be the National Humanities Faculty, which is applied to elementary and high schools. Under this program, small groups of scholars and teachers deliver talks to students and aid faculties in designing courses that have special relevance within a particular school—such as a program on human attitudes and values to aid in a school's transition to desegregated classes. A broader aim of the program is to get high schools and neighboring