Briefing

Campaign Conquers Senate

As expected, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the Conquest of Cancer Act and sent it to the House, where only one recalcitrant lawmaker stands in the way of the bill's passage.

Approved 79 to 1, with only Senator Gaylord Nelson (D–Wis.) dissenting, the bill would achieve virtually all of the objectives spelled out last fall by the National Panel of Consultants on the Conquest of Cancer (*Science*, 5 March). As a compromise with the Administration, the instigators of the campaign to vastly increase this country's cancer research effort, agreed to leave the cure cancer campaign within the National Institutes of Health—but in name only.

Although it would be built upon the present National Cancer Institute, the new program would have an independent budget and its director would be responsible only to the President. The imposition of this massively-funded cancer elite upon the NIH could easily lead to a host of jurisdictional problems. And, not surprisingly, the current NIH leaders are somewhat apprehensive.

In the House, the Conquest of Cancer Act must pass through the health subcommittee, chaired by Paul C. Rogers (D–Fla.), who has already voiced opposition to the concept of a separate cancer authority.

"I'm not convinced," said Rogers in an interview with *Science*, "that the so-called compromise bill passed by the Senate is the desired mechanism for cancer research. We certainly should increase our cancer research effort, but I see no reason to disrupt the NIH at this time."

Having achieved their goal of making opposition to the separate authority appear to be support for cancer, the lobbyists working for the American Cancer Society and philanthropist Mary Lasker predict that the bill will pass the House easily, in spite of Rogers' opposition. They point to widespread support for the cancer bill, both in Rogers' subcommittee and in the parent Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. Moreover, a parade of witnesses, from both inside and outside the Administration, will testify in favor of the bill at hearings to be held before the Rogers subcommittee. All of this would appear to make Rogers a very lonely man if he were to unilaterally delay the bill's passage. If the predictions of the Laskerite and Cancer Society lobbyists are as accurate for the House as they were for the Senate, then there should be a separate cancer authority within the NIH by the end of the year.—R.J.B.

NSF to the Rescue

In a salvage operation accompanied by no ballyhoo from either party involved, the National Science Foundation has granted $200,000 to Science Service, Inc., to help the financially ailing, nonprofit organization make ends meet this year. As a result, says E. G. Sherburne, Jr., the director of Science Service, "We're on the road to recovery."

Science Service is probably best known for its weekly magazine *Science News*, which circulates to some 115,000 laymen, students, teachers, and other interested professionals, and for conducting its annual Science Talent Search among gifted high school students. (The talent search is sponsored by the Westinghouse Educational Foundation). Science Service also runs such youth-oriented activities as the International Science Fair and Science Clubs of America, and it provides subscribers in the 10 to 16 year age group with kits of experiments called "Things of Science."

During more than half a century of operation, Science Service, whose trustees include a number of distinguished scientists, has earned a reputation as an influential force in the popularization of science. But in recent years, a succession of annual operating deficits ranging as high as $365,000 has pressed Science Service increasingly closer to the brink of financial failure.

A year ago, in an effort to gain sufficient backing to survive, Science Service approached the AAAS to discuss the possibility of merging or otherwise having the Association assume its debts, assets, and functions. Despite close ties to Science Service (the AAAS appoints 3 of its 15 trustees), the AAAS directors voted against any such action. The AAAS did offer to provide free management advice, but Science Service declined the offer. Shortly thereafter, it turned to the NSF for help.

Science Service's grant proposal was apparently debated at great length within the NSF and was scrutinized (as are all grants of this magnitude) by the foundation's highest council, the National Science Board. Eventually, the foundation decided to award the $200,000 grant through its Public Understanding of Science Program, and so notified Science Service on 12 April. The decision, however, came to light only last week, in a brief and favorably inclined newspaper item by columnist Jack Anderson. An NSF spokesman indicated that the grant did not merit a news release; nor did *Science News* find its fiscal transfusion newsworthy. "We don't usually report that kind of thing anyway," Sherburne said.

In at least one respect, however, the grant does seem worth noting. Although the NSF has previously subsidized struggling new professional journals for a short time, it has rarely, if ever, come to the rescue of an established publication aimed primarily at a lay or student audience.

In explanation, NSF officials say they awarded the grant only after a meticulous probe of Science Service's finances and management and after considering its overall public services. "The magazine is only a small piece of the operation," one NSF administrator said. "You have to consider the total package. Our objective is to keep alive an organization that is doing several very good things for young people." He went on to say that a 4-month audit of Science Service found "no fat" in a budget of roughly $1.2 million. "Staff members were not overpaid, and their offices were almost too modest," he added. The grant will essentially be used to pay off the organization's accumulated debts, and it may be renewed next year, if necessary.

Both Science Service and NSF say that the grant will in no way influence editorial policy of *Science News*. But an agreement between the two organizations does stipulate that the management of Science Service be improved. To this end, NSF officials say, promises

have been extracted from Science Service's trustees to take an active and personal interest in their organization's affairs. Moreover, two trustees who retired recently have been replaced by three men with formidable reputations for adept management—Gerald F. Tape, president of Associated Universities, Inc.; Frederick Seitz, president of Rockefeller University; and Jacob Rabinow, vice-president of Control Data Corporation.

Thus, by all accounts, Science Service's fiscal condition is under control and its vital signs are improving. Sherburne says that income is up, expenses are down, the magazine is running slightly in the black, and concludes, "We're rebounding."—R.G.

Program Given Notice

Harvard's pioneering program on technology and society will be phased out, and the remainder of its big IBM support grant will be used to create new teaching posts related to the original purposes of the program in regular departments at Harvard.

The program was established in 1964 under a pledge from IBM to provide a total of $5 million over 10 years for the study of the effects of rapid technological change on the economy, on public policy, and on the character of society.

The decision to liquidate the program as a separate entity was based on the recommendations of an external committee formed early this year and chaired by retiring Harvard president Nathan M. Pusey. Remaining funds are to be turned over to the university rather than to the program, and the program is to be wound up by the end of the 1971–72 academic year. A Harvard internal faculty committee made the recommendation that the money be used to establish three professorial chairs.

Director of the program since its inception has been Emmanuel G. Mesthene. Holder of Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia, Mesthene was on the research staff of the RAND Corporation for a number of years in the 1950's and served as consultant to Congress and Executive agencies. In the early 1960's he was on the staff of the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) and served as secretary of the first OECD ministerial meeting on science.

From the outset the program on technology and society occupied an anomalous position at Harvard, since it was set up outside the university's regular academic structure. Staff members of the program were involved as individuals in seminars and other teaching activities at Harvard and M.I.T., but the program was operated essentially as a foundation sponsoring research and as a publisher and a disseminator of information. A faculty committee made up of high-powered members of the Harvard faculty and chaired by dean of engineering Harvey Brooks was formed in addition to an advisory committee of prestigious outsiders, but observers say that no really strong links with the university have ever developed.

Particularly in its early years the program was the target of hostility in Cambridge. Some of this apparently was generated by disapproval of the direction the program was taking, but there also seems to have been some resentment that program funds were not controlled by the university or more easily available to senior faculty members to finance their own projects.

All those asked by *Science* to comment were reluctant to talk for attribution about the stricken program, and Mesthene himself is out of the country until the end of the month. But a fairly common view is that, because of the large grant involved, the program was expected to fulfill high expectations, but, at the same time, just what was expected was ill defined.

Rumors that the program was in trouble in recent years stemmed partly from reports that IBM was not delighted with the way things were going. When the program was originally funded, it was said that IBM officials were alarmed about public concern over the impact of automation on employment and hoped that the program would produce a helpful clarification of issues impinging on computer use. IBM spokesmen insist that the corporation from the beginning has left supervision of the program strictly to Harvard, but did raise the question of whether the program was meeting its objectives. Some observers feel that the decision reached after the scheduled review at the 6-year point was strongly influenced by the attitude of Pusey, who is said to feel that the program never attained adequate academic stature.

Some observers suggest that the program would have fared better if it had gained wider public recognition for conspicuous "landmark" or "breakthrough" research. Favorable public notice was gained by work bearing the program's imprimatur, such as *Run Computer Run: The Mythology of Educational Innovation* by Anthony Oettinger of Harvard and Mesthene's own book *Technological Change: Its Impact on Man and Society*. But while the program seems to have built a sizable group of "users" for its research and for information it disseminated, notably in the form of research reviews which have been described as "superannotated bibliographies," the audience remained a specialized, largely academic one.

The program has a final year to run, and there has not yet been a serious evaluation of its performance. Informal estimates solicited by *Science* from observers outside Harvard, however, range from "a disaster" to a more typical, rather oblique comment that "I don't think anyone has a very good record (in the field)." Harvey Brooks, who had sustained contact with the program and seems to take the view that it was a necessary experiment, feels its most useful long-term effect will lie not in specific research results but in its influence on people who had contact with the program.

Now, as one Harvard observer tactfully put it, the program is being "institutionalized," with the plan apparently being to create three endowed chairs in the area of technology and society. It is said that one will be in engineering, one in the new Kennedy school, and the third in the liberal arts faculty. As plans stand now, Mesthene will not occupy any of the new teaching posts. And some additional funds will have to be found, since an estimated $1.5 to $2 million will be left of the IBM grant and it takes, in very round numbers, $1 million these days to endow a chair at Harvard.—J.W.