

White House Presents Vapid Technology Plan

Some presidential messages to Congress tell the lawmakers and the public about real, new programs. Others, however, are just little more than reshufflings of existing rhetoric on known policies. The President issued his first message on science and technology last week and, while its very existence is something of a landmark for the research community, nonetheless, the message falls into the latter category. It asks for no new resources and says little that had not already been announced in the fiscal 1973 budget and in the State of the Union address last January.

The substance of the message is a sad contrast to the optimistic hints that emanated from the Administration last summer and fall, when the new special consultant to the President, William M. Magruder, was speaking of a grandiose scheme called the New Technology Opportunities Program, which would improve the U.S. trade position in high technology products, bolster industrial R & D, and reemploy scientists and engineers.

But when science adviser Edward E. David, Jr., presented the message to the press last week, Magruder wasn't even there (he was lecturing on the West Coast). Many of Magruder's original ideas are only faintly reflected in the message, and the name he used for the program is hardly mentioned. One version has it that that Office of Management and Budget, possibly with some cues from the White House inner circle, decided to tighten the purse strings around the throat of a \$2-billion list of technical programs that Magruder had drawn up.

David tried to put the best face on the plan in his remarks to the press by terming it a "building block." He pointed out that the "tentative approaches" and evaluation of results as more is known is in keeping with the scientific method anyway. He even climbed out on a limb to term the message "pro-technology" and "pro-quality of life." It is difficult, however, to imagine a technology message which would deserve the appellation antitechnology.

The message spells out five technological, civilian R & D targets which were already listed in the State of the Union address and in the budget (see *Science*, 21 and 28 January). The five goals add up to \$358 million in additional obligations for fiscal 1973. They are: (i) *clean energy*, including pollution control as well as expansion of the June 1971 energy message, development of the fast breeder reactor, coal gasification, magnetohydrodynamics, solar energy, fusion power, and energy sources in the outer continental shelf; (ii) *transportation*, including R & D on personalized commuter rapid transit systems, air traffic control, the short takeoff and landing vehicle, and tunneling; (iii) *natural disasters*, including hurricane modification, prediction and control of earthquakes, and fire research; (iv) *emergency health care*, including training of manpower and developing emergency hospital services and transporting of victims; (v) *drug control*, restating the June 1971 drug message, which called for a Special Action Office on drugs. No new supplemental moneys for these topics are being re-

quested nor, except for the drug office, are any new organizational changes being outlined.

The bulk of the President's message, however, does not discuss programs, but instead "policies" and general philosophy. While these pronouncements, coming as they do from the President, are high in status, they are low in clarity. Few of the policies listed are new. By and large, only vague hints are given as to how they may be implemented; clear lines of administrative responsibility are not indicated. As a blueprint for action, it is smudged.

An example is the stance on manpower. One of the original aims of the Magruder effort was to find ways to reemploy the thousands of unemployed and underemployed U.S. scientists and engineers. But the message gives the manpower situation three sentences, of which the gist is this: "Creative, inventive, dedicated scientists and engineers will surely be in demand in the years ahead; young people who believe they would find satisfaction in such careers should not hesitate to undertake them."

Among the other "policies" and "actions" listed is the previously announced plan to divide \$40 million between the National Science Foundation and the National Bureau of Standards for inquest and experimentation on how to stimulate R & D. Also listed are plans for more active patent filing, studies of tax, patent, and antitrust policies, and a rise in the ceiling of loans permitted to small businesses through new legislation.

State and local governments are to be given greater opportunity to communicate their technical needs and priorities to Vice President Agnew's Office of Intergovernmental Relations and to David.

Foreign scientists will be invited to work on cancer at the National Institutes of Health and at Fort Detrick, and on drugs and pollutants at the National Center for Toxicological Research at Pine Bluff, Arkansas. A review will be conducted of participation by the United States in international technological organization programs. These measures, under the international section of the document, appear to be the opposite in tone from the trade-related, national productivity problems, with which the original Magruder group was concerned.

The only truly new program announced is a series of Presidential prizes for achievements in research and development, although no details are given on who will be eligible, or by what measure they will be judged.

Possibly the most significant part of the message is that which designates the Department of Commerce as the executive branch's "focal point" for policy development on industrial R & D. This will probably make Peter G. Peterson, the new Secretary of Commerce, and a key participant in the technology study, a pivotal figure in industrial R & D policy making in the future. Since the Office of Science and Technology's only new authority seems to be that of working with state and local governments, it is likely that Peterson may turn out to be the new technology czar of the Nixon Administration.

—D.S.