

Military R&D and the Congress:

A "Cakewalk" for the Pentagon

We are well into the period of post-war follies. . . . It is now fashionable to attempt to dismantle the [armed] forces of the United States.—Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, in remarks on 2 August at a Pentagon ceremony.

[The] committee is not much more than the Pentagon's lobby-on-the-hill.—Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.), a new member of the House Armed Services Committee, in an addendum to the committee's report on the defense procurement bill.

Schlesinger, the former Atomic Energy Commission chairman who recently came to the Pentagon after a brief stint as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, made the above comment reportedly in response to indications that Congress might favor a relatively modest 156,100-man cut in the armed forces personnel strength of 2.2 million. It clearly was not inspired by congressional actions in regard to the Pentagon budget generally because, with few exceptions, the Pentagon seems likely to get nearly all that it wants. In fact, Representative Schroeder's comment seems close to the mark and could be applied not just to her House committee but to the Senate Armed Services Committee as well. New actions taken with respect to the proposed Trident submarine, the most expensive (\$1.3 billion per ship) weapons system ever, bear out the point, despite a game effort by a Senate R&D subcommittee at making a critical analysis of the Trident and other new defense systems.

The House approved a \$20.4 billion defense procurement authorization bill on 31 July after rejecting amendments to eliminate, reduce, or slow down certain weapons acquisitions, namely the B-1 bomber, the CVN-70 (the Navy's fourth nuclear carrier), two antiballistic missile systems, and the Trident.

Not more than a half dozen of the 43 members of the House Armed Services Committee regularly challenge some major Pentagon weapon proposals, and even they do not always stick together. These members have had little success in persuading the House to vote against the recommendations of the committee majority. In the floor debate last month, Representative

Otis Pike (D-N.Y.), who, for more than a decade now has been one of the committee's lonely dissidents, urged his colleagues to kill the B-1 bomber program. The current cost estimate for this program now exceeds \$12 billion. Not only is the B-1 enormously expensive, Pike said, it is quite unnecessary given the availability of other nuclear strike forces. "The winner of the next war is not going to be he who grinds his enemy into the finest powder," the congressman added. His amendment lost by a vote of 313 to 96, which was the best showing of the day for any amendment to cut weapons systems. The one to slow up the Trident program had so little support that its sponsor did not even bother to ask for a recorded vote.

A Rare Victory

The most that the Armed Services Committee dissidents were able to accomplish—and this was a rare victory—was that one of them, Representative Les Aspin (D-Wis.), succeeded in having the House fix a spending ceiling that would force the Pentagon to reduce its overall outlays by \$950 million below what the committee had recommended. This would keep outlays at the same level as the current year's, with an allowance for inflation. But it would not bring any sense of congressional priorities to defense spending and it might have little effect on weapons programs dubiously regarded by some House members.

In her comments on the Armed Services Committee's performance, Representative Schroeder had observed that the committee had made scarcely any effort at a critical analysis of the defense program or its major components. She said in part:

Unfortunately, the committee seemed to prefer spending its time in a cursory review of individual weapons systems—a "once over lightly" approach—simply deleting a bit here and adding a bit there. Some members gave the impression that doing the hard and tedious work of analysis and criticism of our complicated military program is somehow unseemly, unmilitary—indeed, unpatriotic.

. . . The ideal situation, in my opinion, would be one in which all hearings were adversary in nature. As I see it, the military should present its case, and the committee should receive it with considerable skepticism. The questioning should be sharp and the debate free and open. . . . It would be healthy for the committee to hear differing opinions within the military establishment itself. . . . Indeed, it should be the policy of the Pentagon to encourage open and public debate within its own ranks. Having its program accepted each year should be a trial by fire for the Pentagon rather than the cakewalk it is today.

Moved by suggestions that it was a patsy for the Pentagon, the Senate Armed Services Committee a few years ago established an R&D subcommittee that was supposed to look the Pentagon hawks straight in the eye. This committee, chaired by Thomas J. McIntyre (D-N.H.), has had some modest success in reducing weapons programs but would have had more were it not for the feckless behavior of certain of its own members. In 1972, McIntyre himself, apparently feeling heavy election year pressure, switched and voted in full committee for procurement of the Trident system after having first supported his subcommittee's decision favoring immediate steps toward procurement of only the 4000-mile-range Trident I missile which could be used in the existing Poseidon submarine.

This year McIntyre's subcommittee again took a unanimous position on Trident, recommending a \$885-million cutback which, while not interfering with work on the first Trident submarine, would keep work on six additional Tridents from beginning. In McIntyre's view, there is no surer way to waste money and destroy public confidence in a weapons system than to start its production even as it remains under development. Yet, just as it did last year, the Armed Services Committee has now reversed the decision of the R&D subcommittee on Trident, doing so by an 8-7 vote after Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), a subcommittee member, switched his vote. When the Senate acts on the procurement bill this September, Trident probably will be allowed to go full speed

ahead, damn the torpedoes and the likelihood of major cost overruns.

Senator McIntyre has denounced Secretary of Defense Schlesinger for

his "postwar follies" remark, suggesting that the real follies are not in Congress but in the Pentagon. An outside witness to defense decision-making,

in the Pentagon and in Congress, may be tempted to dispense his criticism evenhandedly, with plenty for all parties.—LUTHER J. CARTER

Auto Pollution: Research Group Charged with Conflict of Interest

One of the first issues that Russell Train, the nominee for administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), will have to decide if and when he takes office, will be what to do about that agency's role in automotive pollution research. Train's predecessor, William Ruckelshaus, promised Congress that he would reassess some of the agency's close research ties with the auto and oil industries it regulates.

At issue is EPA's participation in a key research organization, called Coordinating Research Council—Air Pollution Research Advisory Committee (CRC-APRAC), which has sponsored much of the research that has been important to federal regulation in the battle to clean up the nation's air. CRC-APRAC is supported by the auto industry, the oil industry, and the EPA.

However, a few months ago Ruckelshaus promised Congress:

If it [EPA participation in CRC-APRAC] gives the appearance to you and possibly to others that this has compromised our position, we will have to cease this association. . . .

An internal review is under way at EPA, and a report is due soon.

Because three-fourths of the \$20 million that the group has spent to date has come from the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Motor Vehicles Manufacturers' Association (MVMA), with only the remaining fourth from the government, CRC-APRAC has been accused by public interest lobbyists and members of Congress as having a pro-industry bias. Moreover, because it puts the regulated industries in bed with the agency that regulates them, the arrangement, says the pollution guru of Congress, Senator Edmund Muskie (D-Me.), poses a

serious conflict of interest for EPA.

The APRAC group is one wing of CRC, a major trade organization which, for over half a century, has been a vehicle for getting the oil and engine suppliers together on some common problems. The APRAC group is unusual to CRC and to other trade research organizations in general because it receives large amounts of federal funding and routinely has federal officials participating in its decisions. The arrangement grew up in the late 1960's, when auto pollution was first becoming recognized as a national issue and when research funds for EPA's predecessor in the field, the National Air Pollution Control Administration (NAPCA), were scarce. Now, however, critics argue that EPA should be pursuing a "Caesar's wife" policy and keep itself above suspicion in its regulation of the auto industry, and that the CRC-APRAC tie is compromising.

The alleged conflict of interest which Muskie and others see in EPA's tie with CRC-APRAC, however, may be only the tip of the iceberg. Almost without exception, when a research scientist is funded by CRC-APRAC, he is already taking money from both the industry being regulated and the regulator. But this potential conflict is further tangled by the fact that many of CRC-APRAC's contractors, separately, depend on the auto or oil industry for a major share of their business. Some take money not only from the industry, but from EPA too. What emerges is not a clear-cut line between scientists working for EPA and those working for industry, but, instead, a murkier set of in-group relationships. Small wonder then, that, after 5 years of national effort, many

apparently simple technical questions relating to auto emissions control remain hotly disputed.

Of CRC-APRAC's foes, the best-known is Muskie. In hearings last April on the EPA postponement of the 1975 emissions control deadline that was imposed by the 1970 Clean Air Act, the Maine Democrat challenged the objectivity of studies done by a researcher who has done much of CRC-APRAC's work on the health effects of carbon monoxide (CO), Richard D. Stewart of the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Stewart had found evidence that the average level of carboxyhemoglobin—an indicator of CO poisoning—in the blood of nonsmokers across the country was below 2 percent, which is the safe limit now used in federal regulation. (Stewart also found carboxyhemoglobin in the blood of smokers to be higher than that in nonsmokers.) Muskie, illustrating why CRC-APRAC researchers are accused of bias, pointed out that Stewart's work had been overseen by a typical CRC-APRAC panel, headed by a man from the General Motors Corp. (GM), with people from Phillips Petroleum Co., Marathon Oil Co., another GM man, and one EPA representative, who, Muskie added sarcastically, was "slightly outnumbered." Muskie also waved a full-page Chrysler Corp. ad publicizing Stewart's results, and he said, "Chrysler is the one automobile manufacturer which has attacked the health basis of the 1975 standards. It is that information which is going to be peddled around the country . . . for the purpose of attacking the basis of the 1970 Act."

(In fact, Stewart's findings, as written up by Associated Press and carried in newspapers across the country, were interpreted as evidence of the heavy influence of smoking in CO poisoning, a finding which other researchers on health effects—such as John Goldsmith of the California State Health Department—believe may be valid but nonetheless distracting from the main point: that susceptible people, involuntarily exposed to CO from auto exhaust, suffer adverse health effects.)

Muskie listed other panels of CRC-