dicator was the shift of the science advisory apparatus from the White House to NSF. Underlying the change seems to have been not just a dissatisfaction with the science advisory machinery, but also with the basic relationship between the scientific community and its federal patrons which has prevailed since World War II.

Not too deep an excursion into the sociology of science is necessary to find that the science advisory apparatus has been dominated by university scientists who gained prominence in the mobilization of scientists and engineers during the war. In the last decade, that relationship has grown less comfortable. The young turks of World War II have become the old guard. They have held on to positions of influence, and younger colleagues have not yet moved up to succeed them. At the same time, the Vietnam war caused relations to sour between many university scientists and the Johnson and Nixon administrations. A number of influential university scientists extended the habits of academic freedom to the science advisory arena, adding opinions on policy to technical advice, and often doing so in public. Furthermore, university scientists tended to display a coolness toward both Johnson and Nixon of which neither could have been oblivious.

This year there have been clear signals that the Administration was looking for ways to modify the prevailing ties with the scientific community. Probably the clearest of these came in public comments by William O. Baker, president of Bell Laboratories, who is widely regarded as the outsider who is best informed and most influential in Administration science affairs. At a meeting of the American Physical Society in April, for example, Baker said, "Now we continue our plea that the national community respond to the new opportunities and above all to maintain the vital independent linkages between those who know and do science and technology and those who govern and administer for the public benefit. Our Academies, and above all our scientific and professional societies, have been repeatedly and warmly considered in creating new combinations of public and private resources for the progress of research, learning, and development."

Baker went on to note that "we are heartened" by an open letter to the President from the Congress of the Joint Engineering Societies offering

Scientists and the Public Interest

"The public interest movement in the United States is in a critical time of transition," declares Samuel S. Epstein, one of the leaders of a campaign to give consumer advocates more clout. Epstein believes that this is the time for public interest groups to get together with each other or, at the very least, to make an effort to know what the others are doing. To this end, he proposes the creation of a new organization that would serve as a focus or "rallying point" for all the public interest groups in the country. As presently conceived, one of the main functions of this organization would be to collect and disseminate information about who's who and what's going on in the world of the public interest specialist.

Epstein, professor of environmental health and human ecology at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, finds fault in the present state of the art of public interest advocacy that might be corrected by some kind of coordinated effort. As he sees it, there are two major deficiencies. One is a lack of initiative. Consumer groups, he maintains, spend too much of their time running around putting out brush fires. The other is the lack of responsiveness of scientists and engineers to societal issues. He charges that scientists in general, and committees of the National Academy of Sciences in particular, often fail to give advice with the public interest foremost in mind. Therefore, he would like scientists specifically representing the public to be included in the membership of all relevant government committees.

Issues such as these were discussed recently at a meeting on "Science, Technology, and the Public Interest" at the Brookings Institution. In letters of invitation, participants were asked, ". . . is there a need to develop an organization such as an 'Academy of Public Interest' or an 'Academy of Unrepresented Interests'?"

The conclusion, apparently, was that there should be a national organization but that the creation of an academy is a bit too ambitious.

What will happen, in all likelihood, is this. A yet-unchristened organization will open an office in Washington with a small staff. It will either publish a newsletter or help finance one that a public interest group already has going—a newsletter with information about what pieces of consumer legislation are in Congress, what problems exist in federal agencies that merit attention, and what actions various individual groups are taking. Also envisioned is a national roster of scientists who are both qualified and willing to testify on public interest issues or to sit on government committees. The organization, says Epstein, might also publish a journal and sponsor an annual meeting.

If this coordinating organization comes into being, it will be funded by the Monsour Medical Foundation, which sponsored the meeting at Brookings. The foundation, located in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, about 20 miles from Pittsburgh, was created in 1966 and dispenses about $600,000 a year. Approximately half of that money is used to provide medical school scholarships for students who will practice in the Jeannette area.

The role of the scientist in advising the government on public interest issues was also a principal topic of discussion at a recent meeting in Alta, Utah, which was sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. There, representatives of learned societies met with members of public interest groups but, by the end of the 3-day conference, apparently showed no inclination to take any clear action. Although many scientists present reportedly believed that the general sentiment of the memberships of learned societies is that they should do something, it is unclear what the members want, or whether they would pay the higher dues that public interest activities would inevitably require. According to participants, a suggestion at the meeting that the societies develop lists of members willing to help out in public interest issues evoked little response.

—B.J.C.