SCIENCE

1 March 1974

Vol. 183, No. 4127

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

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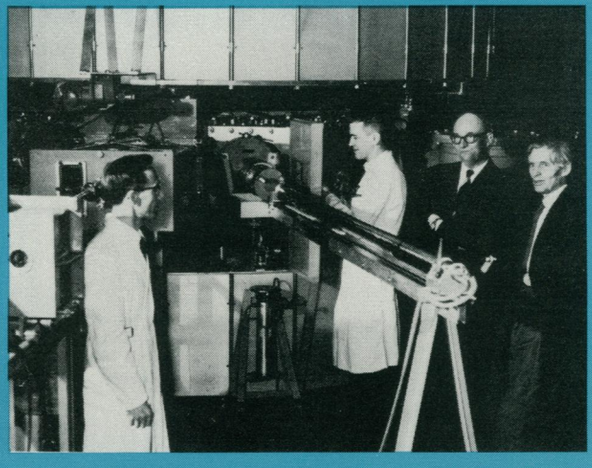

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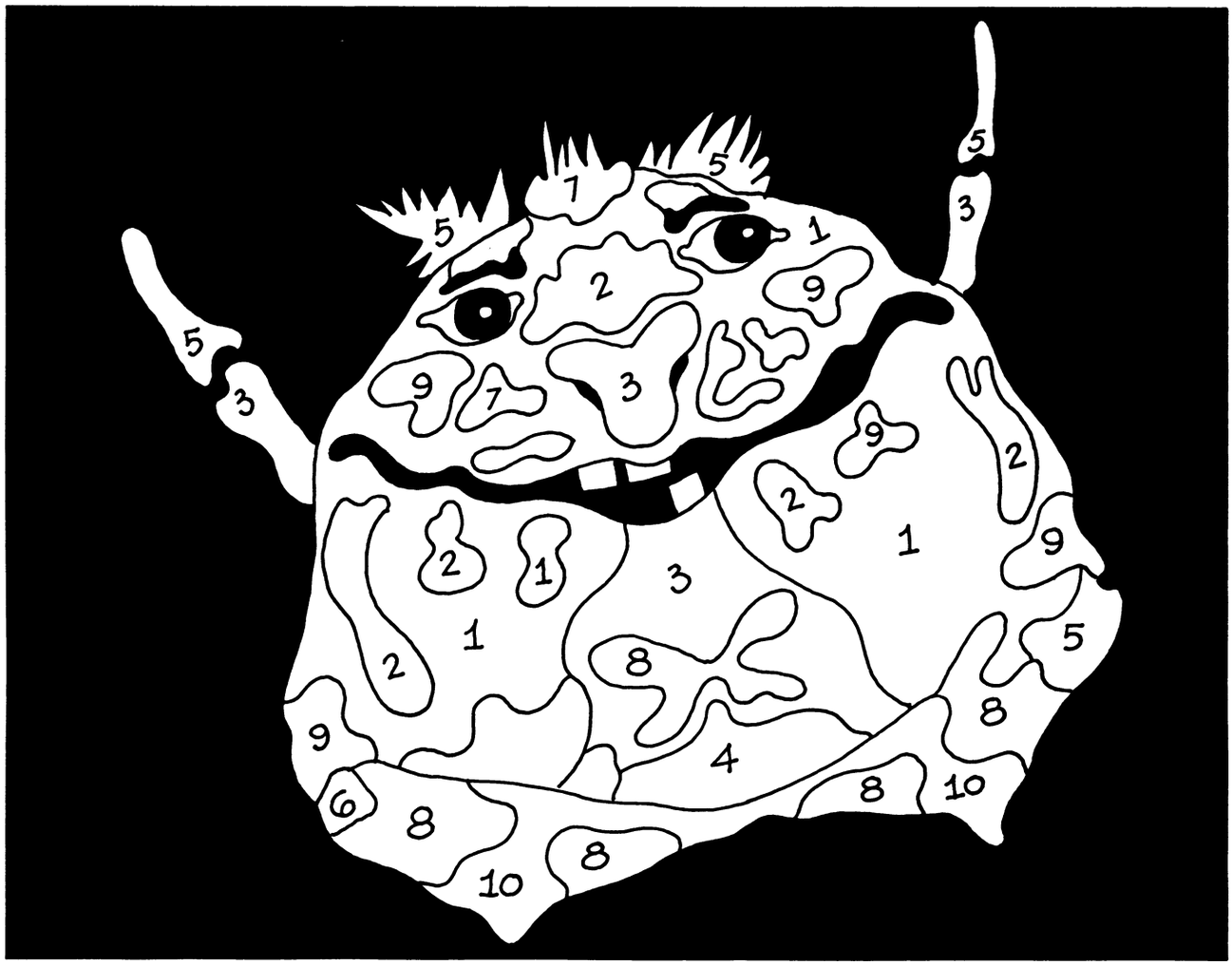

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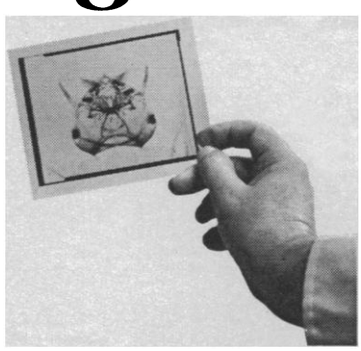

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SCIENCE

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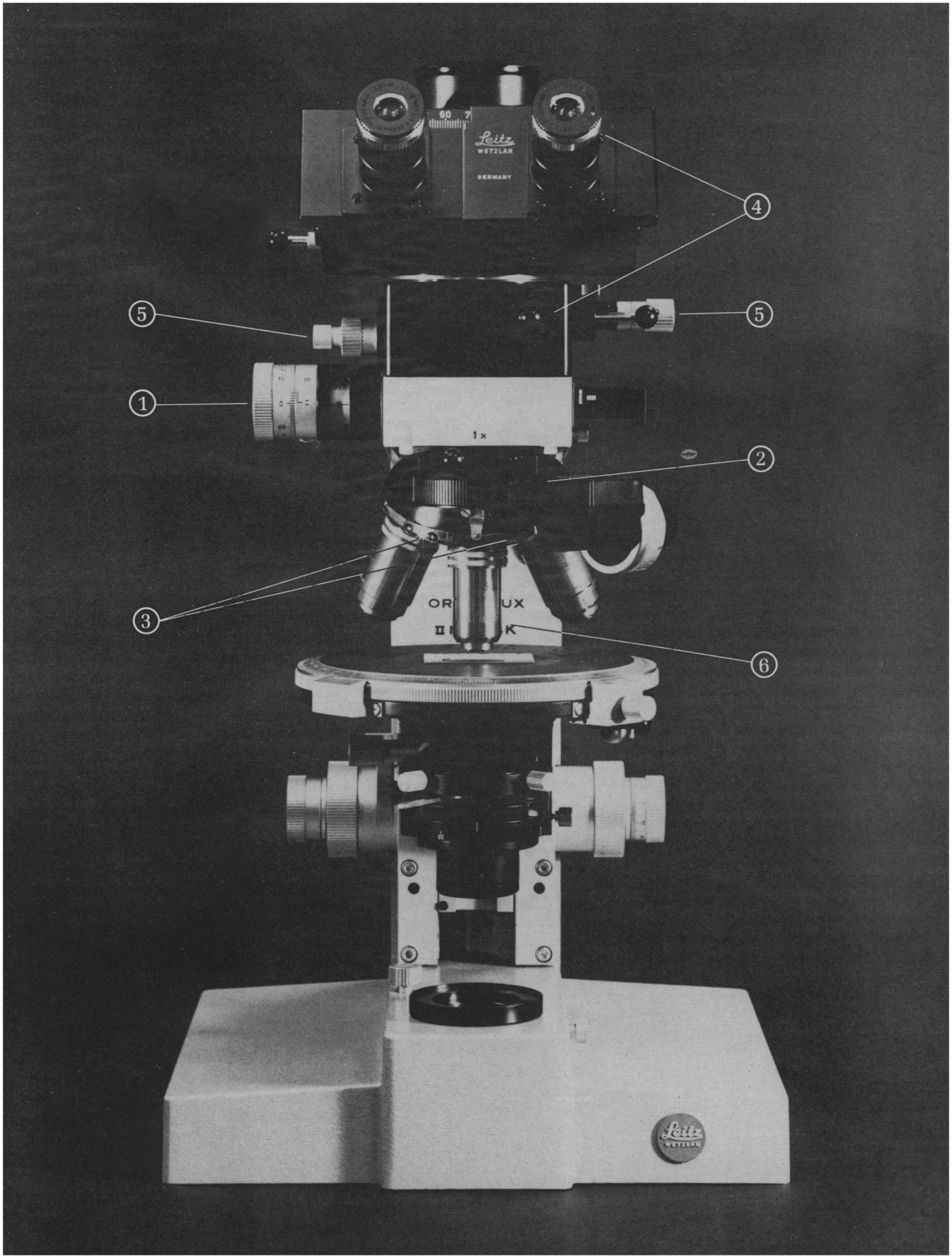
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

COVER

Head of adult male pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*). Area below ear delineates subauricular gland. See page 860. [D. Müller-Schwarze, Utah State University, Logan]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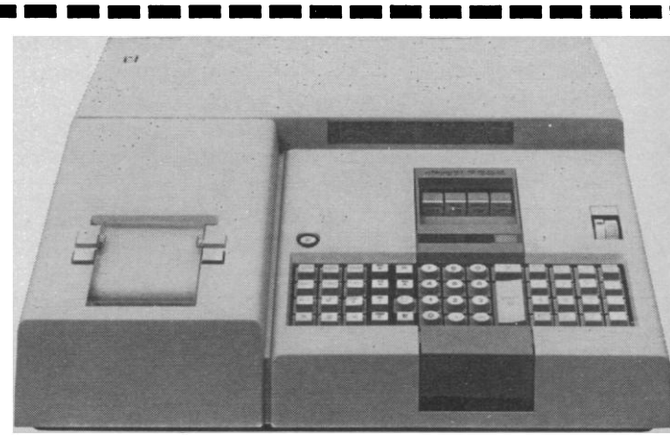

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Prospectus for Science Advising

"If you can't lick 'em, join 'em" is vintage advice, but it is not congenial to independent-minded scientists, engineers, and medical researchers. More to our liking might be, "If you can't lick 'em, kick 'em." There's mostly kick in recent complaints about lack of science advice in the White House. Indeed, the hand-wringing that accompanied abolition of the Science Adviser and his Office of Science and Technology has given way to outspoken criticism. Opinion is yet to come to a thoughtful focus, however.

Comment about the need for realistic scientific and engineering advice for top federal policy-making is fair enough. If lawyers, economists, business and military types, public relations folk, and old cronies have their say at that level, simple "justice" and "balance" call for science-based advice, too. More important, scientific insight is vital to wise and innovative federal policy. But these views have been discounted. They are shrugged off in the spirit of the reported comment by the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that science should be everywhere, but also nowhere in particular. We might add: nowhere except in the science stable where it can be contained until the lay policy-makers see a need for it.

To offset this refractory view we should propose specific duties for a modernized White House science apparatus. Specific, recognized responsibilities would enable that apparatus to transcend dependence upon a close personal presidential relationship.

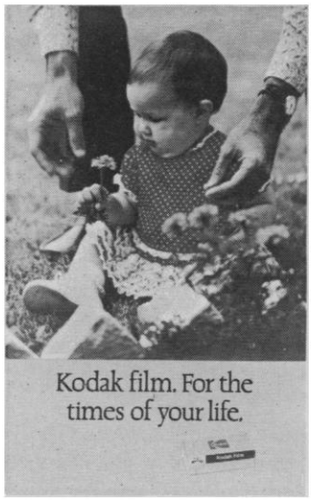
One job a new White House science apparatus could do for the executive branch is the same one that congressional authorization committees do for the legislative. Executive authorization would involve a substantive review of federal R & D programs and certification of those that were worthy. The actual funding of those programs would, as now, be the task of OMB in the executive branch and of the appropriation committees in Congress. Any new science office should have the executive authorization function for all federal R & D. That function would give the new office influence over R & D second only to OMB.

Yet, authorization may sound too sterile for our liking. How are new programs, based on new technical possibilities, to be created? The mystique of government influence provides the answer. It is surprising how mere suggestions from an office with authorization prerogatives can stimulate proposals for new programs from an agency or department. The potential for creativity is there.

Another job for a new White House apparatus would be presentation of a yearly "state of science and technology report" in the fashion of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the National Security Council reports to the people and the Congress. This mode of communication is preferable to having the White House principal scientist at the beck and call of Congress. To the extent that he is exposed to Congress in that fashion, he will be obliged to support Administration positions or else make himself suspect to his political patron.

Both authorization and public reporting were attempted by the White House Office of Science and Technology before it was abolished. The results were not accepted. It was seen as being out of its stable. Before any new White House apparatus is put in place, its duties should be clearly delineated and perhaps legislated. I have suggested two duties; our community can certainly propose others. Rather than merely kick, we should point toward this level of discussion. That level is required if the synergistic relations between scientist, engineers, medical researchers, and the government are to be reestablished and sustained. Only a structure with well-recognized duties will have sufficient clout to influence policy and be robust enough to survive the winds of political fortune.

—EDWARD E. DAVID, JR., *Executive Vice President, Gould Inc., 8550 West Bryn Mawr Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60631*



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