Strategic Weapons Policy: CED Urges Stronger Hand for Congress

The way in which the power and prerogatives of the Presidency were employed during the Nixon Administration has prompted strong demands that Congress increase its influence on major federal policy decisions. The latest prescription for reform comes in a Committee for Economic Development (CED) report* dealing with national security affairs, particularly with strategic nuclear weapons. The report urges, basically, that Congress become a better match for the Pentagon on policy analysis and spells out some of the ways this could be accomplished. Whether Congress is willing and able to follow such advice is, of course, as significant as the force of the CED arguments.

The CED is a nonprofit research and educational organization founded during World War II by business leaders concerned about easing the economic trauma of converting from a wartime to a peacetime economy. In the ensuing quarter century, CED has produced a series of reports and recommendations mostly focusing on the economy, but extending to problems in education, urban affairs, and management of local, state, and federal governments.

"Business Academic Partnership"

CED's board of trustees is, in effect, a club of 200 influential business executives, most of them the presidents or board chairmen of large corporations or financial institutions which support CED activities. Despite its big business base, CED works at being nonpartisan and nonpolitical. The organization has a centrist image, and its reports generally are regarded as sensible, if seldom daring, and as influential in the sense that they represent the views of an important constituency.

CED prides itself on its "business-academic partnership" and has a sprinkling of university professors and administrators on its board of trustees and on its 60-member research and policy committee, which bestows the CED imprimatur on reports and recommendations. The CED practice when undertaking a study is to choose a chairman from among the trustees and to appoint as project director an academic who ranks as an expert in the field under study. In the case of the national security report, the chairman is Franklin A. Lindsay, president of the Itek Corporation, and the project director is Thomas C. Schelling of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, who established his credentials as a defense intellectual with his writing on deterrent theory.

The new CED report focuses on the handling of the military budget by the House and Senate armed services and appropriations committees and especially on the $20 billion a year spent on development, procurement, and operation of nuclear weapon systems and on the defenses against such systems. The report's recommendations center on three major sets of problems:

1) Under the present system of 1-year authorizations and appropriations, Congress often votes a relatively small amount to make a start on a new weapon system without having a clear idea of what the ultimate commitment of funds is likely to be. The report urges that Congress base its action on a realistic assessment of total costs and judge each weapon system in the context of the entire defense budget. The report recommends changing the present single-year funding pattern to a 5-year authorization. Every year, estimates on major weapon systems would be revised and a fifth year estimate added for a "rolling" authorization.

2) The choice, development, production, and deployment of weapon systems can have a profound effect on foreign policy, and the report urges Congress to create "congressional pro-

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A Think Tank for Congress?

A discreet effort to establish an "Institute for Congress" which could provide the House and Senate with independent analyses of public issues and programs has been under way for more than a year. The aim is to mount a 5-year experiment with a privately funded, nonpartisan organization to provide a caliber of policy analysis not now available to Congress.

A small bipartisan committee with a broad spectrum of federal experience and contacts is backing the project. The members are James R. Killian, President Eisenhower's first science adviser; Gordon J. F. MacDonald, an original member of the Council on Environmental Quality; Washington attorney Harry C. McPherson, Jr., who served on the staff of Lyndon B. Johnson in the Senate and at the White House; Cyrus R. Vance, a high-ranking Defense Department official during the Democratic Administrations of the 1960's; and Alton Frye, a former administrative assistant to Massachusetts Republican Senator Edward Brooke. The proposal for the institute surfaced publicly in June in a statement on policy analysis for Congress by Frye before the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations.

The committee proposing the institute has taken careful soundings of opinion from the leadership and influential members of the House and Senate and has apparently met a generally encouraging reception. A small initial foundation grant is financing the preliminary work, and efforts are being made to raise funds needed to finance the project. The 5-year budget is set at $22.5 million, with $11.5 million the target for the initial 3 years of operation. The assumption is that Congress will take over financing of the institute if the experiment works. Foundations are said to be interested but somewhat gun-shy about a project which might be viewed as having political overtones. The committee, however, is going ahead with organizing a board of trustees and seems to be optimistic about prospects.—J.W.

Ethics Commission Named

The National Research Act, signed into law on 12 July, created a federal commission on ethics that, among other things, is charged with deciding what to do about the present moratorium on fetal research (*Science*, 2 August). During the last 2 months, the names of literally hundreds of persons have been put forth as candidates to serve on this commission whose decisions will have a significant effect on the conduct of biomedical research. "Everyone thinks he's an ethicist if he thinks he knows right from wrong," said one Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) official who added that the infighting that went on in the process of paring a list of hundreds down to 11 individuals was intense. On 10 September, HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger announced the names of the 11 he had chosen.

Officially called the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, the ethics commission has 2 years during which to investigate a number of issues set forth in the law. Fetal research is the one that must be dealt with first. In addition, the commission must deal with the complex problems of obtaining informed consent from children, prisoners, and the mentally ill when they are asked to participate in experiments. The ethics of psychosurgery is another topic on the agenda.

Legally, the ethics commission is a creature of HEW and its decisions, the experimental guidelines it will recommend will apply only to research funded by HEW. However, many individuals in Congress are anxious to have guidelines that apply more broadly to all government agencies, and the commission is asked to come up with a mechanism to make the rules for performing experiments on people uniform.

Ironically, one such mechanism, if you can call it that, already exists but it is not one established for the purpose of bringing all federal agencies into willing conformity with each other. Take a hypothetical situation. As things stand now, if a university researcher, supported by funds from the Department of Defense, conducts an experiment that violates HEW standards, the Secretary of HEW can withdraw all HEW funds from that researcher's university, even though only the DOD-sponsored experiment gave offense. It is a powerful means for persuasion, although most HEW officials doubt the secretary would take such an extreme measure. What is needed is a saner government-wide policy.

The ethics commission exists today in large part because of efforts by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D–Mass.) and his staff to get Congress to create it, in spite of some opposition in the House. The commission is widely regarded as being modeled on the federal commission Senator Walter Mondale (D–Minn.) proposed several years ago in the wake of the furor over organ transplantation.

The 11 Weinberger asked to serve are: Joseph V. Brady, professor of behavioral biology, School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University; Robert E. Cooke, vice-chancellor for health sciences, University of Wisconsin; Dorothy S. Height, president, National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; Albert R. Jonsen, adjunct associate professor of bioethics, School of Medicine, University of California; Patricia King, professor of law, Georgetown University Law Center; Karen A. Lebacqz, assistant professor of christian ethics, Pacific School of Religion; David W. Louisell, professor of law, University of California, Berkeley; John Kenneth Ryan, chairman, department of obstetrics and gynecology, Harvard Medical School; Donald W. Seldin, professor and chairman, department of internal medicine, University of Texas Southwestern Medical School; Eliot Stellar, provost and professor of physiological psychology, University of Pennsylvania; and Robert Turtle, lawyer, Washington, D.C.

Charles U. Lowe, former scientific director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, is expected to be executive director of the commission staff. Lowe is now at HEW as a special assistant for pediatrics.—B.J.C.

cedures for consideration of both the international political and the military aspects of foreign policy. . . ." The report goes on to develop the point as the following excerpt indicates.

> In urging this, we were not merely paying lip service to the ideal of a unified foreign policy. We are interested in finding ways to achieve that goal. We are concerned with the practical aspects of making the technical world of military requirements compatible with the constraints of diplomacy and international politics, and these practical aspects are essential to the development of a sound national security policy. The ultimate decisions about a successor to Polaris or the B-52 are too serious to be reached without taking diplomacy and foreign policy into consideration.
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> However urgently such decisions may be needed in order to get choices made and funded, we wish to emphasize that they concern the strategic weapon systems that the United States believes will be most conducive to peace, security, and economy during the period beginning about ten years from now and stretching to the year 2000. To make such decisions without regard, for example, to the economics of energy, the foreign policy of China, the political complexion of Western Europe, the developmental and diplomatic status of the sea beds, the extent of nuclear proliferation, or the technology of international terrorism would merely be to bury one's head in the shifting sands of today's military technology.

3) Congress is at a disadvantage in dealing with the Pentagon because of limits on congressional access to information and expertise. The CED report urges Congress to clear a path through the thickets of the security classification system by "enacting legislation establishing its own bipartisan procedure for certifying individuals and organizations cleared for access to security information." With respect to expertise, the report suggests that Congress both strengthen the capabilities of its own staff to deal with the military budget and weapon systems and also find new sources of analysis and advice beyond Capitol Hill. Primarily, CED thinks Congress would profit from a relationship with a new "institute for research and evaluation," which the report sees as being "both loyal to Congress and independent of it." The report also asks Congress to encourge responsible analysis of the military budget by organizations and individuals outside government.

The concept of a think tank with a special link to Congress is not original with CED and, in fact, a fair amount of planning and missionary work in the cause of an independent research

institute serving Congress has already seen done (see box, page 37).

Most of the report's recommendations are, in fact, not new. What lends them considerable cogency is the authors' knowledgeability about weapon systems. They emphasize, for example, that the useful life of a weapon system does not begin until nearly a decade after Congress has authorized production. This fact and the longevity of major weapon systems [the B-52 bomber and the Poseidon (née Polaris) submarine will figure importantly in the U.S. arsenal for a quarter century or more] are key factors in strategic planning.

The report also cautions Congress about using weapon systems as bargaining chips in arms control negotiations, a ploy which seems to be much in fashion. CED recommends the following approach.

> We believe that Congress has a positive role to play in the process of strategic arms limitation bargaining. But in view of the risks involved, we urge Congress to be doubly cautious about authorizing any system that is justified principally in terms of its bargaining value. If the five-year authorization process can be augmented by contingent or conditional authorizations, Congress can help the executive branch to clarify its intention with respect to weapons under negotiation, can clarify its own intentions, and can communicate to the Soviet Union the conditional status of systems under negotiation, due for negotiation, or not available for negotiation.

The new report is one of a CED series concerned with improving the decision-making process in government. CED takes no position on whether the military budget is too large. The view expressed is that "Most Americans are willing to pay a high price for a peaceful nation and a peaceful world, but the Committee questions whether tax dollars are always spent in the most effective ways to pursue these goals." The committee also eschews judgments on the "choice, timing, or validity of individual weapon systems or programs" and the lack of such judgments deprives the report of some force and substance.

Committee Attitudes

A serious question for anyone proposing reforms for Congress is whether the legislators are disposed to accept the advice. Observers of Congress tend to feel that the committees authorizing and appropriating funds for the military are among the least suggestible in this respect. The habits of these committees have been shaped by a conception of the congressional role which dates at least three decades. It has been regarded as not only proper but patriotic to give the Pentagon most of what it asks for. The habit of congressional deference to the Pentagon professionals was set during World War II and the Cold War. Throughout this whole period this deference was reinforced by the interest of some committee members in the military installations and defense industries in their districts and states.

Vietnam and the increasing expense of weapons systems has had a dampening effect on the old attitude, and the arrival of some younger, more skeptical members has introduced a sharpened note of dissent into both House and Senate discussions.

Congress as a whole is developing more analytical horsepower. The General Accounting Office has moved increasingly from acting simply as an auditing agency to carrying out critical evaluations of programs. The Congressional Research Service in the Library of Congress is now bigger and better financed, although still overburdened with trivial assignments from individual legislators. The recent creation of an Office of Technology Assessment to serve Congress is a key experiment in strengthening congressional resources in policy analysis. And the establishment of a joint congressional committee on the budget is an important step endorsed by the report. Congress has a long way to go to match the resources of the Executive branch, but more is being done now in this cause than at any time since the advent of the so-called Imperial Presidency.

—JOHN WALSH

RESEARCH NEWS

The 1974 Fields Medals (I): An Algebraic Geometer

The highest award to which a mathematician can aspire is the Fields Medal, an award comparable in many respects to a Nobel Prize in the prestige it confers. J. C. Fields, who set up a trust for the gold medals that constitute the award, said only that they should be made "in recognition of work already done and as an encouragement for further achievements on the part of the recipient." This has been interpreted to mean that the medals should be given to young mathematicians (generally those under the age of 40), a tradition that has been closely followed since the first two medals were awarded in 1936. The Fields Medals are given out only every 4 years, at the quadrennial convening of the International Congress of Mathematicians. This year Fields Medals were presented to David B. Mumford of Harvard University for his work in algebraic geometry and to Enrico Bombieri of the University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy, for his work in number theory and minimal surfaces.

David B. Mumford was awarded the Fields Medal for his many fundamental contributions to algebraic geometry. Mumford was born on 11 June 1937 in Three Bridges, Sussex, England. His father was a British subject with original and forward-looking ideas about education in the colonies, who taught in Tanzania and London and later worked at the United Nations. Mumford was educated at Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard. An early recognition of his promise was a Westinghouse Talent Search prize given him for his construction of a model computing machine which was logically quite intricate and powerful, though mechanically unreliable. His enthusiasm for algebraic geometry first became evident when he wrote a term paper on infinitely near points of plane curves in a course I gave. While he learned much from A. Grothendieck, his principal teacher is Oscar Zariski, who now has the unique