Office of Science and Society Programs

The Office of Science and Society (OSS) develops programs and manages activities in two areas: (i) science, technology, and public policy and (ii) environmental studies. It also provides staff support for several AAAS committees, including the committees on Science and Public Policy and on Environmental Alterations.

The AAAS Congressional Science Fellows Program provides an opportunity for accomplished scientists and engineers to spend 1 year helping members of Congress and their staffs utilize scientific and technological information more effectively in making legislative judgments.

The major objectives of the program are to strengthen staff capabilities in an area where many congressmen have acknowledged the need for help, and to increase the knowledge and understanding of government decision-making and policy processes within the scientific community, thereby making public service careers a more viable professional option. Thus the program eventually aims to change institutional patterns both within the Congress and within the greater scientific community. Several other professional societies sponsor Fellows, with AAAS coordinating the central program. This year there are six AAAS Fellows and six from affiliated societies.

Each spring and fall the OSS, in cooperation with the Brookings Institution, arranges and sponsors a series of science and public policy seminars specifically designed for members of Congress and key congressional aides and featuring outstanding American scientists. A similar set of seminars is arranged for the community of science attachés of foreign embassies in Washington.

The OSS served as one of the principal coordination and planning entities for a workshop/conference on "Energy and the Environment: A Challenge for Technology and Lawmaking" held in Albany, N.Y., during January 1974. The workshop was jointly sponsored by the Speaker of the New York State Assembly and by AISLE, a group of representatives from 20 professional societies, including the AAAS. It was attended by 60 professionals in fields ranging from science and engineering to architecture and public accounting, and by more than 30 legislators from the New York State Assembly. Some 50 legislative recommendations resulted, several of which have become laws.

The focus and organization of federal science and technology policy is of major concern to the OSS. During the spring of 1974 the Committee on Science and Public Policy, on request from the Committee on Science and Astronautics (now Science and Technology) of the U.S. House of Representatives, produced an analysis of present and future requirements for science and technology policy, plans, and organization. The document was used by the House committee in preparing its most recent hearings on the matter of science policy organizations at the federal level.

The OSS has documented its experience with a popular exposition on the role of science and technology in addressing community level social problems in a report entitled *Community Information Expositions*. This project was one of several which have been undertaken to explore techniques of citizen and professional involvement in regional and local science and public policy matters.

Wendy Weisman-Dermer

The 1974–75 AAAS Congressional Science Fellows: Dr. Pamela Ebert, Dr. Henry Kelly, Dr. Gary Thomas, Dr. Jon Viegel. At far right: Richard Scribner, director of Science and Society Programs Office. Not shown: Dr. Kevin Cornell and Dr. Jerome Harper.

Office of Science Education

The mission of the Office of Science Education (OSE) is to catalyze the improvement of education in science and mathematics, chiefly, but not exclusively, through the channels of formal education. Until it was disbanded earlier this year, the AAAS Commission on Science Education advised the OSE on its programs. Currently the chautauqua-type Short Courses for College Teachers program is one of the major concerns of the OSE. Each course consists of 2 days of intensive study and discussion in the fall, a period of about 3 months for individual study, and a final 2-day session in the spring. Nearly 10,000 college teachers in the natural and social sciences, mathematics, and engineering have participated in the program since it began in 1969. The courses have been conducted within a network of 12 field centers extending from Amherst, Massachusetts, to Claremont, California, and from Atlanta, Georgia, to Beaverton, Oregon.

A significant feature of the program has been its evolution from traditional, discipline-oriented courses to inter- and cross-disciplinary courses dealing, to a large degree, with problems of science, technology, and society. This shift in emphasis has come about in response to expressions of need and interest by college teachers, and has brought the program directly into the focus of the principal objectives of the AAAS. A series of study guides are being prepared from course materials

(Continued on page 86)