

opment (*Science*, 30 May 1975). But the new report gives the fallacy a catchy title, the Scientific Opportunities Syndrome, with obvious acronymic possibilities (SOS), and provides a detailed exposition of the origin and consequences of the error.

The analysts agree that scientists accrued the prestige and power and the confidence to influence policy through the successes of science in World War II and later in the space program. The Mencher report describes the syndrome as follows:

Thus, both in the U.K. and U.S. there have been spare scientific and technological resources: a compulsion to derive spin-off benefits beyond the needs of the original mission; an attitude of great expectations resulting from achievements of the heroic scale programs with a consequent high level of confidence developed in the ability of scientists to match these resources to national concerns according to a procedure which we have identified and designated the *Scientific Opportunity Syndrome* (SOS). It invokes the following sequence of precepts:

- 1) National concerns can be met by using available or by developing appropriate new technology.
- 2) The identification and development of the technological solution to a national concern is the mission of the scientists and technologists whose task it should be to link the two together.
- 3) They discharge this mission by locating and removing obstacles to the implementation of the identified technology and/or by improving or creating an appropriate environment or causing it to be created.
- 4) If after changing the environment and/or removing the major obstacles the problem remains, further improvement of the environment and the removal of other obstacles are required.
- 5) Repeated failure is attributed to inadequate application so that the procedure is continually extended even if the situation deteriorates.

A major portion of the report, and the sections which may well be of greatest interest to American readers, describes the evolution of the Ministry of Technology during the Labour governments headed by Harold Wilson from 1964 to 1970. The report's account of the Ministry of Technology (Mintech), used as an illustration of the working of the SOS is headed "An error of system definition." The progenitor of Mintech was Lord Blackett, a physicist who had emplaced himself in the British establishment in part by his status as the "father" of operations research in World War II. In the postwar years Blackett advocated applying operations research techniques to civilian problems, notably to British industry, and his prestige and ties with the Labour party ultimately made it possible for him to apply his ideas. The first Wilson government came into office in 1964, promising to link "socialism to science and science to socialism" and pledging to do it in "the white heat of a scientific revolution." The instrumentality was to be the Ministry of Technology, which was largely Blackett's brainchild. The trouble, according to the

Briefing

Academy for Contemporary Problems Solves One

The Academy for Contemporary Problems, the Columbus-based research organization founded by Battelle Memorial Institute and Ohio State University (*Science*, 6 December 1974) has a new institutional framework—six national organizations representing the interests of state and local government.

Battelle and Ohio State found it necessary this year to bow out as sponsors. Each had agreed to provide the academy with \$500,000 a year for 10 years from the time of its founding in 1972, with the proviso that each could terminate its support. Ohio State's action appears to have been dictated by current heavy pressures on the university budget. Battelle has had to carry out a major realignment of its finances since it agreed to a settlement arising out of a court challenge to the Battelle trustees' execution of the founder's will (*Science*, 14 February). As part of the settlement, Battelle is transferring the academy's \$2.5 million headquarters to the recast nonprofit organization and is making a capital gift of \$4.5 million. This will bring Battelle's contribution to considerably more than the total \$5 million over the 10 years originally contemplated, since Battelle has been providing \$1 million a year for the academy's \$1.5 million operating budget.

The new member organizations are the Council of State Governments, the International City Management Association, the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Another prospective member, the National Governors Conference, has not taken the legal measures necessary to join.

Representatives of the member organizations will constitute a majority of the new board of trustees, but the organizations are not committed to support the academy financially.

Ralph R. Widner, who has headed the academy since it was established, has been named by the new trustees to continue as president. The academy program of applied research on problems facing society is expected to follow its present pattern. A small central staff provides support for projects directed by academy "fellows," whose appointments will generally last for the life of a project, usually 1 to 3 years.

The academy derives income from

government and foundation research grants and contracts but has depended on support funds from Battelle and Ohio State for a major part of its operating budget. Future plans call for the academy budget to continue at a level of \$1.5 million a year for several years. Efforts will be made progressively to increase income from contracts, fees, and gifts, but it will be necessary to use income and principal from the founding gift from Battelle for the next few years. The obvious hope is that something will turn up, notably the economy.—J.W.

HEW Suggests End of Tobacco Subsidy

The federal government for years has been saying that smoking is bad for your health but millions of people choose not to listen. If paternalistic advice does not work, what will? The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) boldly suggests going after the pushers rather than the users of cigarettes. In the Forward Plan for Health for fiscal years 1977-1981, HEW lists these straightforward "options" for reducing smoking:

- Phase out tobacco price supports and eliminate cigarettes from the 'Food for Peace' program.

- Ban cigarette advertisements or exclude such advertising as a deductible business expense for tax purposes. On the subject of alcohol, the Forward Plan, which was produced in the office of the assistant secretary of health without the advice or consent of congressmen or lobbyists, is no less plain. Among its "options":

- Reduce the alcohol content of certain beverages.

- Restrict advertisements for alcoholic beverages or exclude such advertising as a deductible business expense for tax purposes.

Innumerable things have been tried to get people to protect their health by smoking or drinking only in moderation, if at all, but so far, no one has attempted to tackle the problem by going after the profits of the businesses that thrive on the promotion and sale of tobacco and liquor. Because of the controversial nature of the HEW "options" and the yet unbroken power of the tobacco and liquor lobbies, it is hardly likely that such an approach will succeed now. But it is nice of HEW to think about it.—B.J.C.