

hold. Under the Senate system of multiple referrals of legislation, the space committee was, for example, one of three committees which shared authority over the legislation which returned science advisory machinery to the White House. And Moss was known to hope that his committee might be recast in the mold of the House Science and Technology Committee, which had moved from a virtually exclusive concern with the space program to a broader dominion over research, including energy re-

search, except nuclear energy. Moss was the chief Democratic sponsor of a special select committee to study the reorganizing of the Senate committee system (*Science*, 14 May), and it was assumed that he hoped one result of such a reorganization would be that his own committee would achieve symmetry with the House Committee on Science and Technology, which among other things, is the authorization committee for the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In the House, the chairman of the

subcommittee which handles the NSF authorization, James W. Symington (D-Mo.), was a casualty of the primaries. Symington gave up his seat to run, unsuccessfully, for the Senate seat being vacated by his father, retiring Senator Stuart Symington. (During the past 2 years while NSF has been raked over the coals on Capitol Hill for the vagaries of some of its programs, Symington seems generally to have followed a course of applying pressure on NSF to correct its faults while at the same time protecting

Academy Holds Open Hearing on Research Training Needs

The National Academy of Sciences broke a little new ground in the name of public participation a couple of weeks ago when it held an open hearing to get comments on a report from its committee that has been asked by Congress to decide each year how many new researchers are needed in the biomedical and behavioral sciences and which specialties should get priority. Therefore, what the committee* has to say is of considerable interest to research scientists because its annual recommendations to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare bear directly on who shall get National Research Service Awards, a category of training grant. The occasion was notable for introducing a new element of openness into the conduct of Academy business and because, for this committee at least, such receptivity to public view may well become part of the process by which it does business in the future.

The committee came into being in 1974 when it became apparent that, because of limited funds, someone would have to establish priorities for training grants among competing specialty groups if the country were to avoid training more biochemists, for instance, than it needs. The committee's job puts it in a position of being wrong as far as some groups are concerned, no matter what it does, as was evident at its 4 November hearing in Washington.

The hearing was called to entertain comment on its 1976 report,* issued earlier this year (*Science*, 27 August), that called for a "modest but significant" reduction of federal support of students in the basic biomedical sciences and a "significant reorientation" of sponsorship of training in the behavioral sciences, mainly away from support of predoctoral candidates in favor of postdocs in innovative interdisciplinary institutional programs.

The hearing, which began at 9 in the morning and lasted until 10 at night, was not exactly entertaining. In fact, the opening session had a distinctly soporific quality as speaker after speaker came to the podium to plead his special cause. (The fact that so many speakers were special pleaders served mainly to give the committee confidence that its first report was not full of holes.) The gist of what most witnesses said was this: Your ideas about cutting back and rearranging programs makes good sense, except for persons in my discipline which, being more vital than others to

the national interest, is a special case. Thus, the committee heard why engineers, epidemiologists, pharmacologists, psychologists, and even anthropologists need to be trained in extra numbers at the taxpayers' expense, and each time, in what had become a kind of litany within the first hour, members invited speakers to prove it—with hard data.

The dozing audience woke up briefly just before the coffee break, however, when Jack Rakosky of Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana, took the stand. Rakosky is a young Ph.D. psychologist who is teaching at a liberal arts college because he could not get a job in research and who has a number of friends who could not get jobs at all. Observing that it is more humane to keep people out of the Ph.D. pool than to train them for jobs that do not and, in his opinion, will not soon exist, Rakosky advised the committee to stick with its feelings about cutting back, and to recommend cutting back still further.

He also startled his audience with a novel suggestion for a program he thinks would benefit laboratory research and liberal arts college teaching at the same time. Rakosky would replace the available pool of young people working in labs and actually doing research day to day with college teachers on sabbatical. That way, he reasons, the research would get done and the teachers, who necessarily lose touch with current research if they do not have access to a high-powered lab, would get a refresher course that would be bound to enliven their teaching. His were about the only really fresh ideas, committee members report. However, the committee members seem to concur that the hearing was useful and believe they may hold another next year to get comment on their 1977 report. Member Peter Barton Hutt, a lawyer who has been fighting for 2 years to get the Academy to hold such a public meeting, was particularly enthusiastic about the outcome of the long day's event, noting that the committee did get some help in setting the course for its deliberations during the coming year. For instance, the 1976 report admittedly does not deal adequately with questions about women and minorities in science. Prodded by testimony from those groups, the committee is now likely to take the matter up this year rather than putting it off any longer. In addition, 40 persons who testified (many of whom made a considerable effort to get to Washington) and another 35 who submitted written statements, were appreciative of the opportunity to be heard, which in itself may justify holding an open hearing.—BARBARA J. CULLITON

*Committee on a Study of National Needs for Biomedical and Behavioral Research Personnel. A copy of its 1976 report can be obtained from committee offices at the National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20418.