Resources for the Future, Will It Merge with Brookings?

The future for Resources for the Future (RFF), a pioneering resource and environmental research organization, may hold a merger with the Brookings Institution, the Washington economic and social policy think tank.

A three-way discussion of the merger option is in progress among RFF, Brookings, and the staff of the Ford Foundation, which has been the principal source of support for RFF and a major patron of Brookings. The parties involved emphasize that the talks are in a preliminary stage and that other options for RFF are being left open. However, the discussion of merger terms has advanced far enough for Ford to indicate that the foundation might settle a dowry of $7 million on RFF should a merger go through.

News that merger was a serious possibility caused considerable consternation among RFF staff members when it reached them in mid-June. Their dominant feeling seems to be that RFF would inevitably lose its identity if it became part of Brookings; they also foresee a sharp reduction in staff if RFF were absorbed.

RFF celebrated its 25th anniversary as an independent organization last year. It was established in 1952 with Ford Foundation funds and blessings and is unusual among nonprofit research organizations in having received general support for its operations from Ford over that extended period. Total Ford funding for RFF has amounted to $43 million in general support and $5 million for specific projects. This long-term underwriting has permitted RFF staff to set its own research priorities to a greater degree than is ordinarily feasible for organizations that must rely on grants and contracts as their major means of support. RFF made and sustained a reputation for high-quality, scholarly analysis of problems of resource management, energy, and the environment.*

While RFF, like almost all nonprofits, is feeling a financial squeeze, the current discussion of merger with Brookings was precipitated by the approaching end of a general support grant by Ford. The 4-year grant, which totaled $12 million, is due to run out in September 1979. When the current grant was made in 1975, foundation officials made it clear that Ford would not continue to support RFF with major general support funds and urged RFF to "diversify" its sources of support. A contributing factor to Ford's firm intention to modify its long relationship with RFF is apparently the scheduled retirement next summer of the foundation's president, McGeorge Bundy. Foundation officers are unwilling to commit Ford resources beyond that time.

RFF's president, Charles J. Hitch, also has rather longer-term lame-duck status. Hitch, who is 68, came to RFF from the presidency of the University of California 3 years ago on the specific understanding that he would serve as president for no more than 5 years. Those 5 years would be up in the summer of 1980. RFF staff believe that both Hitch and Bundy wish to have made a lasting disposition of the Ford-RFF relationship when they depart and feel that merger offers a tidy solution.

Tentative terms for a merger have been developed by Hitch, Brookings president Bruce MacLaury, and Ford Foundation officers. Hitch said in an interview that the merger idea has pros and cons for RFF. Included in the advantages he sees is that "Brookings is bigger, older and richer" than RFF, and has an "aura of permanence" to a greater extent than RFF has. A merger would "offer security that a resources and environment program stemming from ours would continue," said Hitch.

He also finds the opportunity for closer collaboration in research programs attractive. RFF and Brookings are already close in some ways since RFF occupies space in the Brookings annex adjacent to the main Brookings building on Massachusetts Avenue's "association row." Brookings also provides library and computer services to RFF as well as conference and dining facilities.

How compatible would the two organizations be if they merged? Brookings is substantially larger, with a $7.9 million annual operating budget and about 250 people on the payroll compared with RFF's $4.5 million and staff of 110.

But perhaps more important, Brookings is known for presenting analysis closely bound to specific policy recommendations. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, justifiably or not, the Brookings reputation as a policy think tank took on a political cast. Especially in the Nixon White House, Brookings was regarded as a haven for displaced Democrats and liberal theorists. In recent years the ballast at Brookings has been deliberately shifted by judicious appointments and the naming as president of MacLaury who is perceived as a middle-of-the-roader ideologically.

RFF, for its part, is known for carefully balanced, scholarly analysis, often on topics that become controversial issues only years later. In fact, RFF is viewed by some observers as so detached and scholarly that its work lacks direct impact on policy. The organization's reputation for innovative theoretical work in its field, however, is generally high in this country and abroad, and this seems attributable at least in part to the view that RFF researchers follow no particular party line.

Hitch agrees that RFF and Brookings have "different styles and images," and says that is a cause of concern to people on both sides who wonder if the two can be "accommodated under one tent." Hitch adds that he thinks Brookings is, in reality, much closer to RFF in attitude and atmosphere than it is sometimes portrayed. RFF's strong suit, according to Hitch, is its "objectivity and sanity." He suggests that in the field of energy and environmental affairs this may be unique, and says it is "important that the voice remain and that RFF not join the rank of the advocates."

RFF's impact is hard to measure in terms of legislative monuments or "best sellers" purveying big ideas. But senior staff members associated with RFF over the years have made lasting impressions on discussions in their fields. Such have been the contributions, for example, of Marion Clawson in land use planning, John V. Krutilla in the economics of natural environments, and Allen V. Kneese on water research and the concept of effluent charges. RFF staff members have generally been productive in fueling their own publications program carried on in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Press, have been active writing for outside publications, and have been in demand on the conference and consultant circuit. In its early days, a substantial proportion of RFF funds went to support outside projects, mostly in universities, but in recent years most work is done in house by per-

*A good account from inside of the history, program, and publications of RFF is found in *Resources for the Future: The First 25 Years*, available from RFF, 1755 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 for $3.

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manent staff or by short termers who use RFF as a base for particular projects.

Gilbert F. White, director of the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado, who is current chairman of the RFF board and has long been active in RFF affairs, feels that in the long perspective of 25 years RFF has made its mark by early applying cost-benefit analyses to the field, taking the lead in environmental quality assessment, and applying systems analysis techniques to residues and wastes.

White says that the RFF board position in the current discussion is clear. The board is not committed to merger. Its "objective is to see that the kind of service performed by RFF as a research organization continues," and the board will, therefore, "explore any possibility that assures stability and continuity." This means further consideration of merger and of other options.

The option favored by most RFF staff members is continued operation of RFF as an autonomous organization, even without the sustaining flow of general support funds from Ford. To continue to operate in the manner to which RFF is accustomed, however, it is generally agreed that a sizable infusion of "unrestricted funds" would be necessary. Such funds have never been abundant and are particularly hard to come by these days. But only such funds are likely to make it possible to maintain the independent mode of operation and stable staff which has made RFF effective.

Efforts under Hitch to diversify sources of funds made "considerable progress" according to White, but are "not yet sufficient" to support the RFF sans Ford funds. Somewhat less than half of RFF's current annual budget of $4.5 million comes from other foundations, government agencies, and industry. Since 1975 RFF has had a specific policy governing acceptance of grants and contracts. Projects must fit in with RFF's research program, RFF staff must design and carry out research as it thinks proper, and research results are to be made public. There seems to be general agreement that, so far, work on new grants and contracts has met the criteria, but staff members are apprehensive about relying on such funds because industry and, particularly, government agencies insist on setting the terms of research they sponsor.

RFF staff members note an irony in the fact that Ford Foundation staff members at the time of the last award of the general support grant when Hitch joined the organization, urged RFF to expand as well as diversify. Staff members have been increased from roughly 60 to about 110 in the last 3 years, many of the newcomers having been recruited to perform research on new grants and contracts.

Hitch says that whether or not an RFF-Brookings merger occurs it will be necessary to reduce RFF staff. White notes that in considering prospects for

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House's Mr. Health Seeks New Career

Florida Democrat Paul G. Rogers, for the last decade the chief architect of health legislation emerging from the House, has announced he will not seek another term in Congress.

Rogers' decision was unexpected. Chairman of the House health subcommittee, a post he has held since March 1971, Rogers is probably at the peak of his power and influence in the Congress. In his district, the West Palm Beach area of Florida, he won his last election with 91 percent of the vote, and did not face serious opposition this time.

Rogers is said to feel he has done all he could in Congress and that, at age 57, the time to start any new career is now. He may go into law or business, or even the Administration should he get any suitable offers.

The Democratic members of the House commerce committee will elect the new chairman of the health subcommittee. The most senior member of the subcommittee after Rogers is David E. Satterfield of Virginia. Rogers, however, is said to have asked third ranking member Richardson Preyer of North Carolina if he would be chairman. Preyer has a family connection with the drug industry which would probably require the Food and Drug Administration to be removed from the subcommittee's purview should Preyer become chairman.

The stature of the subcommittee is likely to be diminished for a while, whoever becomes its new chairman. By hard work and political dexterity, Rogers usually got the subcommittee sufficiently united on any issue that its positions pre-

vailed over challenges both from the parent House commerce committee, chaired by Harley Staggers of West Virginia, and from the Senate health subcommittee under Edward Kennedy. Where Kennedy and Rogers differed, for example on setting up the National Cancer Institute as an independent agency, Rogers' position often emerged victorious from the House-Senate conference session.

Rogers' style of running his committee was well described by a staff aide who was quoted in the 1972 profile of Rogers by the Ralph Nader Congress project: "He employs great patience and allows each member to have his say. He then identifies the mid-point which he suspects everyone can agree on. Even though the subcommittee represents a broad cross-section of the political spectrum, Rogers's bills are always reported unanimously. This sort of operation assures the legislation will skim through without attacks or proposed amendments by other members."

Rogers entered Congress in 1955, filling the seat that had been held by his father. He has described himself as a "Conservative Democrat" and in the 1960's supported such causes as reducing foreign aid, cutting off funds to dissident students, and the immediate arrest of Stokely Carmichael. "Yet the deeper he has delved into health and environment issues," columnist Judith Randal observed in 1971, "the more committed he has become to the need for a greater governmental role."

Major legislation that bears the stamp of the Rogers committee includes laws on migrant workers' health, health manpower, cancer research, community mental health centers, and creation of the National Eye Institute and National Institute of Aging (both creations were opposed as unnecessary by the Administration). In the environmental sphere his committee helped shape the clean air act and the safe drinking water act. In the opinion of committee staff aide Robert

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the future, the board is looking at "the level of program RFF might reasonably carry out." The implication is that the level could be substantially lower.

RFF staff members, some of whom have found the recent news understandably traumatic, tend to see the increase in staff and overhead costs during the Hitch regime as exacerbating RFF's problems. They feel that Hitch, who came to RFF from UC and before that was comptroller in the McNamara Pentagon, had grown accustomed to larger institutions and perquisites and a grander institutional style than RFF provided. Hitch reorganized the previously rather unstructured RFF into three main divisions whose chiefs report to him and provide his main contact with RFF people, say staff members. RFF's administrative staff and the general volume of paperwork have also increased, according to staff members, although they acknowledge that the larger program and increased number of grants and contracts result in greater complexity in RFF operations and record keeping.

Most RFF staff are generally proud of RFF and comment favorably on work conditions there. In some ways they have inhabited the best of research worlds, spared the hassle of university teaching and committee work and the hustle required to raise research funds in many nonprofit think tanks. RFF remuneration, for senior staff, while not munificent, is said to be generally comparable to government salaries, which these days puts them ahead of salaries in most universities.

Under the merger agreement now on the table, RFF would become a division of Brookings, retaining its name and its own funding for 5 years. After that, the decision on RFF's fate would be legally up to Brookings, but the assumption would be that the RFF research capacity would be preserved and cherished. Brookings would get an infusion of expertise and, presumably, a substantial sum of money eventually, since RFF has managed to put aside some $8 million in endowment-like funds and would bring along the additional $7 million Ford proposes as a wedding present.

As it now stands the governing boards of the three organizations have been apprised of the merger talks, but they have taken no formal action. The option of RFF's remaining independent, which is most attractive to the RFF staff, would seem to require the raising of an amount at least equal to the present $8 million RFF kitty to have any real prospect of viability. Initial soundings have indicated it will be difficult to raise outside funds on that scale, but news of the merger proposal could serve to rally support for RFF.

The question of whether the Ford trustees would be willing to provide a $7 million dowry if RFF instead should seek to make it on its own, seems at this point moot. RFF senior staff members came away from a 21 June meeting—at which

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Mayer, Rogers' greatest contribution lies not in any one piece of legislation but in his generic impact on the health field.

Flexible Thought Gets Tentative Blessing

It was only to be expected that the American Tentative Society would long hesitate to commit itself to definite action. First put in business in 1974 by a $300,000 bequest from its founder, AP science reporter Rennie Taylor, the society has for 4 years remained innocent of dogmatic thought, precipitate word, or definite deed. Last month it performed its first activity, the presentation of awards to six scientists.

"They are people who have demonstrated intellectual flexibility," says society president Al Blakeslee in explaining what they have in common. The awards, consisting of $2500 in cash and a trapezoidal trophy, went to the following:

- J. Tuzo Wilson of the Ontario Science Center, for championing the concept of continental drift against then current dogma,
- Frank D. Drake of Cornell, for his early and continuing interest in detecting signals from extraterrestrial life,
- S. Jocelyn Bell Burnell, of the Mullard Space Laboratory in England, who "persevered despite discouraging advice" in the work that led to the discovery of pulsars,
- Norman E. Shumway of Stanford, for pioneering and persevering with human heart transplants,
- Rose Payne of Stanford, whose immunology contributed significantly to the Stanford heart transplant successes,
- Edwin Land of Polaroid Corporation, "for answering his daughter's question 'Where is the picture?' after he had taken her photograph with a conventional camera."

This round of awards is presumably irreversible but may be unique: it is not certain that the awards will be made again, says Blakeslee, nor does the society seem to have any definite future activities in mind.

Speculative Thought Gets Definite Blessing

A new scientific journal has appeared dedicated solely to frank speculation in the hard sciences. Edited by William M. Honig, an American electrical engineer now at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in Perth, the journal is titled *Speculations in Science and Technology*.

The first issue does not explicitly say so, but the journal's intended purpose seems to be as a forum for ideas too radical to be accepted by established journals.

"We do not expect that a large number of the ideas presented here will ultimately find general acceptance," Honig explains in an editorial. But exposure of the ideas will be useful in testing "our accepted ways of thinking in science."

Martin Ruderfer, an electronic engineer of Hempstead, New York, and a member of the editorial board, says that both he and Honig have had trouble in getting their ideas about physics published in established journals. "The established journals are not well equipped to handle revolutionary ideas, yet revolutionary ideas are the font of all scientific progress," Ruderfer says.

Revolutionary papers are sometimes rejected—*Nature*'s alleged rejection of Krebs's paper on the citric acid cycle is one egregious example—but presumably most of them make it into print eventually. Ruderfer contends one would never know about the ones that don't.

The first issue of *Speculations in Science and Technology* contains articles on evolution, relativity and cosmology, subatomic particles, and the ether. Three out of 14 authors are at universities; the others are from research establishments or list private addresses.

The journal costs $58 for five issues a year and the subscription address is Western Australian Institute of Technology, Perth, South Bentley, 6102, Western Australia.

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the Ford Foundation staff was represented—with the feeling that Ford trustees were reluctant to discuss an independent RFF while the organization's future leadership is unknown. RFF staff members felt that the trustees are attracted to a merger because Brookings offers known leadership and an established organizational base. RFF staff see a possible way out of the circumstantial bind if the foundation would extend support for a couple of years so that a formula for RFF independence could be worked out.

Whatever is finally decided on the future of RFF, the Ford Foundation will obviously have a decisive word. In terms of funding, RFF has led "a charmed life," as Hitch puts it. By general assent the Ford protégé has also performed worthily. Now, however, at a time when foundations are suffering from shrinking portfolios, tax law pressures, and heavy new demands on resources, RFF faces a painful adjustment in common with many other nonprofits for whom, so to speak, King Midas has lost his touch.

—JOHN WALSH

Assumptions About R & D's Link to Economic Growth Questioned

The scientific community should not any longer assert that a simple increase in the funding of scientific research and development will lead automatically to economic benefits and growth. The chain of events is really more complex, and scientists need to face this.

Such was the consensus that emerged from discussions and debate at the third annual colloquium on Research and Development in the Federal Budget sponsored on 20 and 21 June in Washington by the AAAS. The well-worn assumption of economic gain was but one of many such shibboleths subjected to examination by the 350 congressional staff members, federal officials, and representatives of private industry and the academic community attending the meeting.

Most of the discussion focused on the relationship of government and industry research efforts to the economy and international economic competition—a topic that is beginning to capture a lot of attention in the Administration and in Congress. In a report* on the topic, former federal budget analyst Willis Shapley described several recent trends that prompted the concern:

• Overall research and development funded directly by private industry has increased steadily since 1967 in constant dollars (that is, even after considering the effects of inflation). But basic research funded by industry, after a big drop between 1967 and 1972, has been more or less unchanged since then. Thus, it seems that an ever-increasing share of research and development money has been going to applied research and product development.

• Overall research and development performed by private industry—including that funded by the federal government through procurements and that funded by industry itself—increased slightly between 1967 and 1977, in constant dollars, by $1.14 billion. The federal share, although stabilized at 35 percent for the last 4 years, is far lower than it was in 1967. Thus, industry must now bear a greater share of the responsibility, or burden, for overall research gains than it has in the past. Altogether, research and development performed by private industry will account for $33 billion of the $47 billion total this year; $21 billion will be funded directly by industry itself.

• Finally, there has been a recent decline in three measures of economic growth commonly thought to be affected by spending on research and development: the rate of growth of U.S. productivity relative to that of other countries; the proportion of U.S. patents held by U.S., as opposed to foreign, citizens; and the number of new venture capital companies promoting innovations. As William Carey, the executive officer of the AAAS, noted at a press conference, talk of economic problems, in light of sustained levels of research funding, prompts questions about the *vitality* of research and development efforts.

The message of the colloquium was not that funding of basic and applied research fails to alleviate these problems, but simply that the subject of how much the funding helps—how much it stimulates industrial innovation and how much it contributes to the sale of domestic products in foreign markets—is more complex and less certain than science policy specialists have assumed.

In order to resolve the uncertainties, several speakers said, additional analysis of the role of research in the economy is necessary. "How can we steer our R & D properly when we are flying blindly?" asked Russell Peterson, director of the Office of Technology Assessment. However, Peterson added that drawing a connection between research and economic growth could be dangerous, because it might fail to turn up solid evidence: "The move by the President in his 1979 budget to include more funds for basic research is encouraging, but the words used tying such research to economic benefits are disturbing. Unless we continue to support substantial basic research with no other objective in mind than the uninhibited search for knowledge, we will erode the very foundation of technological progress."

Thus, Peterson suggested, there are pitfalls both in documenting the economic value of basic research and in precluding economic value from a discussion of research worth. This ambivalence was reflected in remarks at the meeting about the current Administration study of problems relating to industrial innovation. The study, which is being directed by Jordan Baruch, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology, received both praise and criticism for its intentions from various members of the audience. A congressional staff member suggested that the study, which President Carter wants by 1 April, may not be exhaustive enough to establish satisfactorily the ties between research funding and innovation. On the other hand, Baruch noted in a speech that he "will be able to rest in peace" about it even if it just provokes discussion of innovation and research funding within a comprehensive framework.

By this, Baruch meant that it has become increasingly clear that a variety of governmental policies (and not just research funding alone) have an impact on innovation by providing barriers and incentives. Among the factors cited by in-

*Willis H. Shapley and Don I. Phillips, *Research & Development in the Federal Budget: FY 1979*, available from AAAS, 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005 (price, $6).

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