# Reagan to Keep OSTP and CEQ

The Reagan Administration has finally decided that a presidential science adviser should be appointed and that the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) should remain in the White House. OSTP's budget and permanent staff will be reduced, however, and a strict limit will be placed on the number of consultants that can be hired.

Nobody has yet been named to fill the post, but several people have been approached. Simon Ramo, who long dominated speculation about the position, is said to be out of the running, but no other has emerged.

The fate of OSTP had been hanging in the balance for several weeks, for Reagan's inner circle of advisers had doubts about the need for the office, and they were unhappy about how it would fit into the White House's decision-making processes (*Science*, 6 March 1981). But following protests from some scientists and Republican businessmen, OSTP was spared.

OSTP's budget has been reduced by about 40 percent, to $1.8 million in fiscal year 1982, and its permanent staff has been cut from 24 to 12. In addition, OSTP can hire consultants' services adding up to the equivalent of only ten full-time people, a limit that will make it impossible to establish a permanent outside advisory committee.

No limit has been placed on the number of people who can be loaned to OSTP from other agencies, however. This is crucial, for although such people are effectively on OSTP's staff they do not show up on its payroll.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has fared less well. Although it will be kept in existence, its budget has been slashed by nearly 70 percent and its permanent staff has been cut from 50 to 16.

—COLIN NORMAN

University of Chicago states: "I think we are really talking about a political vendetta which goes back to the Great Society programs, when social scientists were the willing allies and tools and designers of programs that were antithetical to what their [Reagan's] philosophy is all about."

Adams and others point out that the Reagan people are not at all unsophisticated about the uses of social research and have applied such knowledge through the campaign. And, of course, their predictions about the success of supply side economics comes from economics research.

At any rate, people are very worried about the long-term effect of the Administration's anti–social sciences bias. For one thing, they perceive the action as devastating to the reputation of the social sciences, which are still young and have gone through a 30-year struggle to gain their present position of legitimacy. Practically speaking, there is the fear that it could take many years to make up for a few years of neglect. The fundamental concern, according to Kenneth Prewitt of the Social Science Research Council, is that budgetary stringency will lead to the deterioration of social science's "infrastructure": national data sets; graduate training programs; centers such as the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center; and the Assembly for Behavioral and Social Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences. These resources supply the basic grist for social studies; allowing them to decay, says Prewitt, is like stopping upkeep of the biologist's lab or the astronomer's telescope.

What is everybody going to do about it? Their advances having been spurned by OMB, social and behavioral scientists are now focusing on Capitol Hill. They got off to a good start on 12 March at hearings on the NSF budget before the science, research, and technology subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee. Witnesses noted that whereas about 60 percent of proposals in the physical sciences get funded, only 20 to 30 percent of those in the social and behavioral sciences are favorably acted on. With the proposed cuts this percentage would be halved.

Lawrence Klein, Nobel laureate economist from the University of Pennsylvania, pointed out that over the years the support of social science research has shifted from private foundations to the NSF. Now, he and others have asserted, social scientists have no other source to turn to. Foundations have directed their resources elsewhere, and private industry is not prepared to fund the kind of long-term basic research that forms the backbone of the social science enterprise.

Zvi Griliches, chairman of the Harvard economics department, accused the budget-makers of being, in effect, penny-wise and pound-foolish. He said the cuts would "cripple economic research for years to come," and that they appeared to be based on "vindictiveness, ignorance, and arrogance." He noted with irony that "most of the recent 'conservative' ideas in economics . . . originated in, or were provided with quantitative backing by NSF-supported studies." (Indeed, five Nobel laureates in economics have received support from the social and economic division.) Said Griliches: "The country is embarking on one of the largest macroeconomic policy experiments in our history . . . and they do not know how to measure its effect. . . . Wise social policy would not cut itself off from self-knowledge."

The central principle that the beleaguered social scientists want to get across to the lawmakers has to do with who defines what is science. Budget-makers talk of "soft" science and "hard" science and place higher value on the latter, while social scientists insist there is only "good" science and "bad" science. The idea of accountants deciding what is good or bad chills them to the bone. Stanford economist Mordecai Kurz, who is rounding up scientists to write letters to congressmen, calls it a "form of scientific prejudice" that borders on "dangerous dogma."

Most observers seem to agree that social scientists cannot win their battle by themselves but will require the support of people throughout the scientific community. "I'd be very much concerned if I were a physical scientist," says one government official. "After all, what field will they go after next?" He suggests it might be biology, home base of controversial gene-splicing.

Right now a lot of people are making lists to demonstrate all the ways social and behavioral research has contributed to society, and paying special attention to ways the field can contribute to two of the Reagan Administration's favorite subjects: productivity and innovation. It has always been more difficult to defend social science than natural science; the results are less tangible, and the contribution may be felt more in the general enhancement of public sophistication than in specific advances. The slap in the face administered by OMB may contribute more than anything else to social scientists' shaping up a compelling case for the value and utility of their field.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN


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