
Reconciliation Action No Love Feast for NSF

National Science Foundation (NSF) funding seems to have suffered a setback when the Reagan Administration won its massive budget victory in the House of Representatives on the eve of the Fourth of July recess. Such was the confusion, however, that it is still difficult to assess accurately the implications.

Rumors during the debate that NSF funds had been "zeroed" were soon contradicted by Republican and Democratic leaders. But NSF is now regarded as more vulnerable to Republican efforts in the House to reduce total foundation spending and shift funds among programs, probably at the expense of basic research.

What happened was that funds for NSF were not included in the huge, omnibus "reconciliation" measure that was pushed through by a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats as a substitute for legislation put forward by the House Budget Committee, on which Democrats hold a majority. Separation from the reconciliation measure means that the NSF authorization will come to the floor on its own. Thus NSF is being thrust into an exposed position at a time when Administration forces are enjoying a run of success on budget matters.

Republican committee staff sources say that because NSF was left out of the substitute reconciliation measure does not indicate that it is being targeted specially for cuts. The thinking was that big-budget, controversial items should be packaged together, and NSF and other small science agency budgets did not fit that bill.

Nevertheless, Republicans are likely to seek to reduce the funding authorized for NSF by the House Science and Technology Committee. The problem as Republicans see it is that the committee's authorization for NSF is some \$127 million higher than the \$1033.5 million requested in the Reagan Administration budget. Republican members of the science committee, led by ranking minority member Representative Larry Winn, Jr. (R-Kans.), are expected to try to trim the NSF total. At the same time they want to increase funding for science education and instrumentation for research.

To find such funds in a smaller budget will obviously require reductions in other programs, presumably basic research.

The budget process is far from complete. Appropriations bills are only now headed for the floor and the House-Senate dialogue on the budget has not really begun. But the rout of the House Democrats in the reconciliation battle may indicate that what is left is largely formalities. And the Administration, notably Office of Management and Budget Director David Stockman, seems to be calling the tune.—*John Walsh*

Polish Scientists Form New Society

After more than 6 months of anxious waiting, a group of Polish scientists and men of letters have been given government permission to form a Polish Society for the Advancement of Sciences and the Arts. The president is Grzegorz Bialkowski, physics professor at Warsaw University.

Bialkowski, who recently spent 3 months at the University of California at Davis, told *Science* that informal groups of academics, doctors, and science journalists began talking of the possibility of such a society following the strikes of last August which led to a more lenient political climate in Poland. The first formal meeting was held last November, when proceedings were initiated to get registration from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Polish Academy of Sciences also gave its approval. The society, which has no formal government connections, now numbers about 200 members, including the president of the Polish Academy.

The purpose of the new society will be to evaluate science policy and education at all levels of the system and to attempt to reduce the influence of the state in the content of instruction and on academic advancement.

Specifically, Bialkowski says the group has been organizing panel discussions on "urgent matters" such as the structure of higher education in science and the humanities. For example, there is pressure among students and professors to eliminate the requirement for some ideologically

based courses on politics and the economy and to make them optional.

Another issue the society wants to address involves the government's standards for financing basic research which Bialkowski characterizes as very formal and bureaucratic. Related to this is increasing the role that merit plays in academic advancement. Says he, "In Poland this is a fresh problem since World War II, completely in disagreement with Polish traditions."

Other areas the society intends to address are the impact of political decisions on science in Poland, cooperation among different disciplines, public understanding of science, and science education from elementary school on up. It also wants to cultivate more international contacts and address technical problems such as the difficulty of obtaining foreign books and journals.

Bialkowski acknowledges that the political situation continues to be unstable but contends that is not a reason to delay plans. "If we say we won't do anything because of fear of violent changes, then we will do nothing at all."—*Constance Holden*

Israeli Denied Visa for Conference in India

An international conference on Mössbauer spectroscopy, which was scheduled to take place in India on 13 to 18 July, has been postponed following difficulties in obtaining visas for Israeli participants. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), which was sponsoring the meeting, withdrew its support on 19 June, and said that it would sponsor no further meetings in India until assurances are given that all bona fide participants would be granted entry visas.

The official reason given by the Indian organizers for postponing the meeting was that a fire on the university campus where it was scheduled to take place had made the logistics very difficult. But the postponement came just a few days after withdrawal of IUPAC sponsorship, and after some speakers had indicated that they would not participate unless the Israelis were allowed to attend.