Biomedical Delegation Lobbies White House

Concern about the fate of the budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been acute ever since January when the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) moved to slash some $200 million from NIH and limit new grants to 5000 (*Science*, 1 February, p. 498). Congressional aides report that thousands of researchers have written their Senators and Representatives to protest. And Congress itself is gearing up for a fight with OMB over this attempt to violate the intent of the legislature.

On 27 March, a group of leading scientists took the case for NIH not only to Congress but also to the Reagan Administration. Operating as the "Delegation for Basic Biomedical Research," the small Massachusetts-based group, founded in 1977, has 14 members.* The scientists met on Capitol Hill with representatives of the House and Senate appropriations committees, among others, and were told by Representative William H. Natcher (D–Ky.) that support from the Administration is the key to substantial, sustained growth. At a press luncheon, delegation members reported that Natcher said, "Congress can only do so much" in terms of appropriating funds in excess of what the President requests every year in his annual budget.

"The point we scientists really have to get across," says delegation spokesman Mahlon Hoagland of the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, "is not just that the 6500 grants should be restored. We have to convince them of science's need for stability in funding, along with money for construction." The delegation is also seeking support for "a change in the budget process itself," with longer awards so that researchers spend less time filling out grant applications and more time doing research. It urges 5-year grants for junior investigators and 7-year grants for senior scientists.

*Nobel laureates David Baltimore, Arthur Kornberg, George E. Palade, Hamilton O. Smith, and James D. Watson, plus Floyd E. Bloom, Ronald E. Cape, Donald S. Fredrickson, Mahlon Hoagland, Francis D. Moore, Steven Muller, Charles L. Schepens, Lewis Thomas, and Federico Welsch.

At the White House, nine delegation members met with William L. Roper, a physician on the President's staff, White House liaison Judith H. Buckalew, and John F. Cogan of OMB. Bernadine Healy (formerly Bulkley) of the Office of Science and Technology Policy was unable to attend. The meeting was described as "cordial but not as productive as we had hoped." The reason: Cogan stuck to the Administration's theme of cutting the budget, a position directly at odds with the delegation's view. On a return visit to Washington, delegation members will try to press their case with White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

—BARBARA J. CULLITON

Watson Fights Back

Every now and then, the constraints of usual discourse are thrown off in the name of plain speaking. In recent remarks at Stanford University, Nobel laureate James D. Watson, never shy, took on the Reagan Administration over the issue of regulations governing genetic engineering.

Calling most of the regulations "simply useless," Watson said, "One might have hoped that the Republicans would have been more sensible about regulations, but they were just as silly as the others. . . . The reason is that the White House receives its advice from people who know something about physics or chemistry. The person in charge of biology is either a woman or unimportant. They had to put a woman some place. They only had three or four opportunities, so they got someone in here. It's lunacy."

Bernadine Healy (formerly Bulkley), a Harvard Medical School graduate who is on leave as a professor of cardiology at Johns Hopkins, is the White House science adviser's deputy for biomedical affairs. She first heard about Watson's comments when members of the Delegation for Biomedical Research, of which he is a member, called her to apologize. Healy said simply "Watson's remarks are an offense to both men and women."

Watson told *Science* that "Anyone who heard me would know I meant it as a slap at the Reagan Administration, not at Bernadine." However, he added, "I do think they should have a qualified scientist handling these issues in the White House, not a physician."

Lambasting those who debate genetic engineering as a threat to the integrity of plant and animal species, Watson noted, "There is a debate now as to what is the right of a mouse. Why are we wasting time in Washington with taking seriously this business? . . . This is complete and absolute craziness. Lawyers will be taking money debating these issues. We should come out pretty fast and we should have strong views. We have to fight back."

Watson's remarks were disseminated through a Stanford University press release.—BARBARA J. CULLITON

Reagan Names Space Commission

President Reagan has named the members of the long-awaited National Commission on Space. Mandated last year by Congress, the commission will, in Reagan's words, "devise an aggressive civilian space agenda that will carry us into the 21st century."

The 14 members were announced by Reagan on 29 March during an address to the National Space Club. Not surprisingly, they tend to be strongly pro-space. The members are:

- Thomas O. Paine (chairman), a former administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).
- Laurel L. Wilkening (vice chairman), a planetary scientist and vice provost of the University of Arizona.
- Lieutenant General Charles E. Yeager, first man to fly an airplane faster than sound.
- Neil A. Armstrong, first man to walk on the moon.
- Kathryn D. Sullivan, astronaut.
- Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, outgoing U.S. ambassador to the U.N.
- Luis W. Alvarez, Nobel laureate physicist at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Paul J. Coleman, geophysicist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and president of the Space Research Association.
- George B. Field, former director of the Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and chairman

of the National Academy of Science's Astronomy Survey Committee.

- Lieutenant General William H. Fitch, retired deputy Marine Corps chief of staff for aviation.
- Charles M. Hertzfield, director of research and technology for ITT corporation.
- J. L. Kerrebrock, head of the department of aeronautics and astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Gerard K. O'Neill, president of Geostar Co. in Princeton.
- David C. Webb, a space development consultant in Arlington, VA.

The original deadline for the commission's report was 12 October 1985; however, the routine security clearances prepared by the White House have sufficiently delayed the process that the commission will now be given an extra 6 months. (In fact, a 15th member is still awaiting clearance.)

Congress requested the commission last year because of a long-standing concern on the part of staffers and members that NASA's program has no real focus or objective. Indeed, many space enthusiasts argue that the U.S. space program has not had a real purpose since the end of the Apollo project. The commission is supposed to provide such a focus.

No one quite knows what to expect, however, and it remains to be seen whether anyone will pay attention when the commission finally does report. But Reagan may. As shown by his enthusiastic endorsement of the NASA space station, and his faith in the "Star Wars" Strategic Defense Initiative, the President is enthralled by the possibilities of space.

—M. MITCHELL WALDROP

Servan-Schreiber Resigns from Computing Center

Paris. The charismatic French politician and publisher, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, has resigned as president of the controversial World Center for Computing, an international research and training center that he set up with the personal support of President François Mitterrand in 1981.

Intended to act as a focal point for the application of microcomputers and artificial intelligence to a wide range of social needs in both the industrialized world and developing countries, the center has established research projects in countries such as Senegal and Tunisia. It also has been closely involved in setting up plans recently announced by the French government to create 10,000 local workshops in schools, colleges, and universities throughout the country.

From the beginning, however, the center had to live through a continuing series of controversies. Its relatively generous funding and support from industry, for example, as well as its concentration on applied rather than fundamental research topics, has been widely criticized by members of university computing departments, themselves often lacking sufficient resources to meet their teaching and research commitments.

In addition, several foreign computer experts recruited to head research teams at the center—most notably Massachusetts Institute of Technology computer scientist Seymour Papert—have left sooner than expected, complaining about what they saw as the excessively autocratic management style of Servan-Schreiber (*Science,* 3 December 1982, p. 978).

Ironically for someone who is perhaps best known outside France for his book, published in the 1960's, warning Europe of *The American Challenge,* Servan-Schreiber's break with the government has come over its refusal to accept a deal under which the new local workshops would each be equipped with American Apple computers.

In exchange, the U.S. company had agreed to set up a manufacturing plant for its Macintosh computers in France. However, despite support from Mitterrand, who had been impressed by Apple during a recent visit to Silicon Valley, the government subsequently decided that it would instead purchase a new IBM-compatible computer currently under development by the French company Bull.

His successor will be medical scientist Jean-Louis Funck-Brentano, a specialist in kidney disease who has long been engaged in exploring the applications of computers to medicine and has previously worked as a top advisor to several government departments.—DAVID DICKSON

Prospects Brighten for Electron Accelerator

The political prospects for the Continuous Electron Beam Accelerator Facility (CEBAF), a $225-million project planned for Newport News, Virginia, have improved now that the facility has finally got a full-time manager, according to congressional aides. Hermann A. Grunder, a Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) physicist who has served as an advisor to the project since 1982, has agreed to become its first director. Grunder's appointment is seen as bolstering the project's credibility.

Efforts to get the 4-GeV electron accelerator underway have floundered because of congressional doubts about the need for new machines, federal budget constraints and the absence of a permanent project director. The Administration requested funds to start construction this year, but Congress approved only $5 million for R&D. Because of its deficit reduction drive, the White House did not seek construction money for fiscal year 1986. The issue is expected to lie dormant until summer when the Department of Energy begins preparing its 1987 budget.

Aides on key House and Senate committees think Grunder will be able to disarm congressional skeptics and unify the physics community behind the project. To orchestrate the accelerator's construction and operation, Grunder is expected to assemble a team of senior physicists from LBL and other universities, sources say. Comments one White House aide, "He has the potential for strong leadership."

Indeed, CEBAF's acting director, James S. McCarthy, a University of Virginia physicist, seems relieved. "The signs are all good now," says McCarthy, commenting on Grunder's appointment, which is expected to be announced later this month. "We are confident we can go ahead with the project in the near future." McCarthy is expected to continue with CEBAF, probably playing a major role in directing research efforts at the laboratory, says Harry D. Holmgren, president of the Southeastern Universities Research Assn., CEBAF's sponsor.

—MARK CRAWFORD