

# McTague Quits White House Post

*The acting science adviser is leaving for the private sector, but no permanent replacement has been named; OSTP is facing an uncertain future*

**P**RESIDENT Reagan's acting science adviser, John P. McTague, left Washington on 23 May for greener pastures in Detroit, where he will be executive director for research at Ford Motor Company. His departure completes the exodus of the entire top echelon of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), and it raises uncertainties about the future of the science advisory apparatus during the remainder of the Reagan Administration.

McTague had held the top advisory post on an acting basis since Reagan's first adviser, George A. (Jay) Keyworth, II, left on 31 December to start a consulting company. McTague, a physical chemist who had been Keyworth's deputy since mid-1983, says he informed top White House officials 3 months ago that he would be leaving, but a replacement for Keyworth has yet to be found. The post will be filled temporarily by Richard Johnson, a space scientist who has been an assistant director of OSTP since November 1983, following 27 years with the Lockheed Missiles and Space Corporation.

According to knowledgeable sources, the job has been offered to some senior industrial scientists, but all have turned it down. It has also been widely rumored that William Graham, currently deputy administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, has been under consideration.

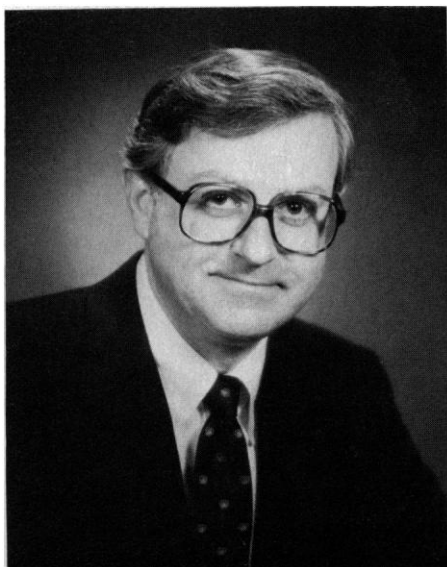
In an interview with *Science* shortly before he left, McTague acknowledged that, with only 2½ years of the Reagan Administration left to run, it will be difficult to persuade a good candidate to take the job. OSTP is clearly facing an uncertain future.

The difficulties in finding a permanent director are compounded by the fact that the office is slated for a 25% budget cut next year, from \$2.217 million to \$1.671 million. Its staff has already been reduced from 42 people last year to 35 at present, and McTague says the budget cut will make it "virtually impossible" to hire top staff. Most of the current employees are on detail from other government agencies, and OSTP is responsible for paying only half their salaries; there will be little flexibility in the budget to hire permanent top-level people

whose salaries OSTP must pay in full.

In August last year, OSTP lost one of its three top officials when Bernadine Healy, the deputy director responsible for the life sciences, left to become vice president for research at the Cleveland Clinic. She has not been replaced. The subsequent departure of Keyworth and McTague completes the sweep.

Nevertheless, McTague contends that OSTP is functioning well at present in terms



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of its internal organization and working relationships with mid- and lower-level White House staff members. "What is not functioning well," he says, "is the position of Science Adviser. There are not good personal relations with the West Wing" of the White House—the small band of top officials headed by chief of staff Donald Regan that controls the policymaking apparatus.

According to former White House officials, Keyworth's influence stemmed in large measure from the relationship he established with Reagan's first chief of staff, Edwin Meese, III. Keyworth himself has referred to Meese as his mentor, and Meese was apparently interested in and supportive of

Keyworth's advice. However, when Meese left the White House in January 1985 to become attorney general and Regan became chief of staff, Keyworth's access to top White House staff members dropped sharply. He is said to have had virtually no contact with Regan.

McTague says his chief point of contact in the West Wing has been John Svahn, assistant to the President for policy development. However, since the beginning of last year, the science adviser does not appear to have been among the key players in the inner circle.

Many previous science advisers have also had difficulties in working with the White House policymaking apparatus, in part because the adviser is technically responsible only to the President, and in part because he has sometimes been viewed as representing a constituency—the scientific community—rather than as a member of the political team. Even if a new adviser is installed soon, he or she will clearly have trouble becoming integrated into the White House structure.

It is not only in the Executive Branch that the top science policy people are leaving. Representative Don Fuqua (D-FL), the chairman of the House Committee on Science and Technology has also announced that he will be leaving Congress at the end of this year. He has been widely regarded as an effective voice in congressional science affairs.

However, Fuqua is leaving to become president of the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), the chief trade organization of the big defense and aerospace companies. Because the science committee oversees a lot of issues that the AIA has an interest in, there have been grumblings that Fuqua will have a serious conflict of interest during the remainder of his term, and his effectiveness will correspondingly be diminished.

Thus, serious voids are emerging in the science policy apparatus at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue just as some key matters, such as whether to build the Superconducting Super Collider and what to do in the post-Challenger phase of the space program, are coming to a head. ■

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