Elliott Committee: First Report Should Quell Fears that Inquiry Has Anti-Scientific Orientation

Representative Carl Elliott's Select Committee on Government Research issued a progress report* last Monday which should go a long way toward burying fears that the committee is the chosen instrument for clobbering federal support of science.

Described as "an expression of our thoughts, plans, and goals," the 19-page committee report conveys Congress's concern about its ability to oversee the $15-billion-a-year federal involvement in research and development. Simultaneously, though, it wrestles throughout with the difficult task of achieving a balance between legislative control and research independence. (Congress "has a clear responsibility . . . to assure itself and the public that funds are being administered wisely, efficiently, and in the public interest. At the same time, we must be sure that the basic incentives to engage in research and development are encouraged and not dampened.") The report's general tenor is that federal support has produced immensely useful results and must continue without being "strangled by excessive controls and red tape." Noting that the "long and luxurious honeymoon" of science and government may be at an end, it adds, "Be that as it may, it is certain that the marriage will endure."

As for specific thoughts that might affect the status quo, the committee reflects the increasing congressional agitation over the geographic distribution of funds for research, development and related educational activities. This agitation, which has been increasing for several years, has been feeding on studies which, for example, show that in 1962, 38 percent of federal funds for university-conducted research was concentrated in ten institutions. Suggesting that it is not happy about this arrangement, the committee also noted that "there is a growing feeling of concern that a more than generous share of the infinitely larger funds spent for applied research and development is also concentrated in a handful of states." However, to balance this viewpoint the report went on to acknowledge that while regionalism merits attention, it should not become the governing factor in research allocations.

The report comes at a time when the prevailing congressional attitude toward the scientific community might best be described as basically sympathetic with a growing component of skepticism and pork-barrel acquisitiveness. The sympathy arises from nothing more than the general contemporary conviction that science is a demonstrated source of national well-being. (As the Elliott Committee report puts it: "Our American society, now as always preoccupied with the notion of freedom, seems to know that through research people may find greater freedom.") The skepticism seems to arise principally from the congressional tendency to look askance upon any rapidly growing federal endeavor—and few have grown as rapidly as federal support for research and development, which has increased more than seven-fold since 1953. The pork-barrel aspect grows out of the knowledge that R&D expenditures are now double the expenditures for civilian public works, and that industry, in looking for new plant sites, has shown favor to areas that are near university research centers.

"Have Not" Demands

By far the most powerful of these factors is demand of the "have nots" for their share, and if any new ingredient is going to flavor forthcoming national science policies, it appears it is going to be that demand. Last year, in denying an increase in funds for the National Science Foundation, the House Appropriations Committee belabored NSF for allegedly failing to share the wealth. Paradoxically, it is NSF that has been about as evenhanded as any federal agency in distributing its funds, but the inland states, and particularly the Midwest, are up in arms about heavy shares of federal R&D support going to California and Massachusetts, and their state of mind and accompanying determination add up to a political force that is going to have a potent effect.

Meanwhile, the Elliott Committee has embarked upon a series of studies (described in this section last week). If the committee's progress report is any indication, both the Congress and the scientific community are likely to find that they are being well served.

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* "First Progress Report of the Select Committee on Government Research," 15 cents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402.

Announcements

The National Science Foundation has announced a **reorganization of its planning functions**, grouping several separate planning units into three offices, each reporting to Associate Director Bowen C. Dees. Henry David, formerly president of the New School for Social Research, New York, has been appointed to head the Office of Science Resources Planning, which will be responsible for "major studies designed to determine the character of policies and programs that will make the most effective use of the nation's resources for science." His appointment will be effective about 15 April.

Jacob Perlman, formerly head of the NSF Office of Economic and Statistical Studies, will head the new Office of Economic and Manpower Studies, which will be responsible for "factual and statistical studies required to develop national, federal, and NSF policy relating to scientific and technological activities." The office combines the functions of the OESS and the educational studies section, Division of Scientific Personnel and Education.

The Office of Program Development and Analysis, for which a head has not yet been chosen, will be responsible "for conducting intermediate and long range studies concerning internal NSF planning . . . [and for] evaluating and analyzing all on-going programs of the Foundation."

Geochemists at the University of Arizona have begun a project to establish a **radiocarbon time scale** for the major geologic, archeologic, and climatic events during the late Pleistocene and the Recent time ages—a period of approximately 45,000 years—in the southwestern U.S. The project, conducted under a 2-year, $30,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, will include materials found in New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, and Texas. Paul E. Damon, a professor of geology and geochemistry at the University, is in charge.

Erratum: The correct title of the paper by A. Sandow, S. R. Taylor, A. Isaacson, and J. J. Seguin [*Science* **143**, 577 (7 Feb. 1964)] is "Electromechanical coupling in potentiation of muscular contraction." In the incorrect version, "Electrochemical" was substituted for "Electromechanical." In addition, the second sentence of the first paragraph on p. 578 should read "Calcium-EDTA and phosphate penetrate very slowly, if at all, into muscle fibers, and they form very tightly-binding complexes with Zn^{2+} and UO_2^{2+}, respectively." In the original, calcium-EDTA and phosphate were transposed.