News and Comment

The Big Accelerator: Competition for AEC Facility Is Stirring Up Communities throughout Country

An examination of newspaper clippings from throughout the country reveals some interesting by-products from the nationwide competition to provide a site for the costliest single research center ever to be built—the AEC's 200-Bev accelerator (*Science*, 19 March).

The financial lure of the center, to be built at an estimated cost of at least $280 million, has led to a prodigious response, totaling 117 formal site proposals from 46 states. What is perhaps most significant, though, is that the quest for this particular piece of federal largesse has motivated many communities to intense introspection about the quality of their university programs, general educational facilities, cultural life, and public services. The quest has also led to the creation of coalitions of university members, businessmen, and politicians. It has brought to the grass roots the belief that the presence of basic research facilities is somehow related to industrial prosperity. And, as a consequence of this, it has intensified and broadcast concerns about equity in the distribution of federal funds for research and development.

It must be recognized that the race for the accelerator is taking place in an atmosphere that has been developing since Sputnik made the country extremely sensitive to the significance of investment in education and research. But the accelerator, with its great price, is the sort of concrete objective that instantly provides a community of interest which ranges from gas-station operators to university presidents, with plenty of real estate operators, congressmen, and bankers in between. And, since the AEC's site criteria include "cultural and educational facilities for some 2000 scientific and technical personnel and their families," the response has differed in quality from quests for missile contracts or other federal expenditures.

It is illuminating, for instance, to examine the conclusions drawn by the Paducah (Kentucky) *Sun-Democrat*, in an editorial on that state's efforts to win the competition. Stating that the nuclear research center "needs vast supporting laboratories, libraries and other special facilities of a great university," the Paducah paper agreed that it was therefore logical to offer the AEC a site near Lexington, where the University of Kentucky and a number of smaller institutions are located. However, it added, "there is a lesson in this situation for us here. Paducah has a good, maturing, developing junior college, which enjoys generous support from taxpayers in both the city and county. We must not be content, however, to allow the community's development in the area of higher education to stop with a limited dream. Paducah Junior College must be supported in all its opportunities for further growth, through federal and state assistance, private bequests, and other means.

"In the future, those cities which lag in providing the best higher educational facilities they can achieve will lag behind in all other respects. Unquestionably, had advanced, college level technological education been available here today," the editorial continued, "the developing chemical center at Calvert City [site of plants for B. F. Goodrich, General Aniline, and other firms] would have grown even faster and bigger.

"The Boston area is the nation's best example of how fundamental great universities are to the economic growth of a region. We have no aspirations on that scale. But," the editorial concluded, "we have industries now which desire and need a college-level technological center, and if we can build one, more such industries will come here."

In Idaho, the accelerator competition provided Senator Frank Church, Democrat from that state, with an opportunity to comment on Idaho State University. "It's a shame," he said, "that we didn't begin building our own university toward the nuclear field when the National Reactor Testing Station first was established." The Idaho Falls *Post-Register* stated editorially that "large research projects, with their large corps of elite personnel and bright promise of durability, are the most coveted largesse in just about any direction one looks." It also stated that "the inter-mountain west is a neglected research child," with the implication that some advantage in the competition might be drawn from being a have-not. But it conceded that, despite many advantages, Idaho was burdened by certain factors. An analysis of the AEC's criteria for the accelerator, the editorial said, shows the "lack of a large research-experienced University close by, need for a larger airport with more accommodating transcontinental schedules, and possibly the leanness of the area's cultural offering."

(For those competitors who may have overlooked the AEC's stated interest in cultural facilities, a wry reminder was provided by Paul W. McDaniel, director of the AEC's division of research. A series of press reports in June quoted him as saying, "Our problem is to find a site where scientists can continue their little girls in ballet school." This inspired the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* to report that the city's telephone directory lists "more than 40 dance studios where ballet is taught." The Milwaukee *Journal*, in a United Press dispatch, reported a fourth-generation ballet school in Madison, as well as dance instruction at the University of Wisconsin.)

In the increasingly turbulent politics of federal support for research, perhaps the most significant aspect of the accelerator competition is the encouragement it provided for coalitions of groups that previously had little occasion to work together. Some of these were in existence prior to the quest for the nuclear center, others developed specifically in response to it, but in many cases the accelerator is the focal point for a new order of cooperative activity. In Wyoming, for example, Governor Cliff Hansen appointed a special committee, including businessmen and university officials, to press the state's application. As is the case in

most states, the committee is in close touch with the congressional delegation. Such contact is especially welcome to members of Congress since it establishes closer relations with influential members of their constituencies and provides the congressmen with an opportunity for showing the voters that they are looking after their interests.

Georgia's quest for the accelerator has involved the cooperative efforts of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the State Science and Technology Commission, the State Department of Industry and Trade, the University of Georgia, and Georgia Tech. It also brought forth from Senator Richard B. Russell (D–Ga.) an attack on the geographical distribution of federal research funds. "Georgia and the other southern states," he told the Georgia Press Association last month, "are entitled to share equitably in the intellectual, scientific, and economic benefits that flow from our own tax dollars, which go to support government research. I, for one," he states, "refuse to concede that all the brains and intelligence are concentrated in a few enlightened pockets of the country such as New England, Chicago, southern California, or even Texas."

In Portsmouth, Ohio, the accelerator was the subject of a talk given by the president of the local Chamber of Commerce to the Rotary Club at a luncheon meeting held at the Elks Club. Following the meeting, the Portsmouth *Times* urged its readers to write to President Johnson "so that the administration may know that thousands of persons here are vitally interested in landing the plant."

In the state of Washington, a consultant to the Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council was quoted as telling the Pasco Kiwanis Club that the accelerator would bring "literally thousands of small industries to the Tri-Cities." In a paraphase of the speech, the Tri-City *Herald* said the speaker "emphasized that what Tri-Citians say to their friends and acquaintances may be picked up by the Atomic Energy Commission." And it went on to quote him directly as saying, "We have to firmly believe that we can do everything necessary to make Hanford the best spot for the accelerator."

In Colorado, the Proton Accelerator Committee of the University of Colorado has been working closely with the Governor's Science Advisory Committee and various state development groups. Early last month, in an address to the Denver Chamber of Commerce, the staff director of Forward Metro Denver was quoted as saying: "Scientifically and geographically, we feel we have a strong case. What's more, our entire congressional delegation in Washington, regardless of politics, is united behind our proposal. It doesn't hurt us to have Rep. Wayne Aspinall [D–Colo.] on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy—the body that must give final approval to the AEC selection."

In Houston, Texas, following a meeting with Representative Albert Thomas (D–Texas), the executive vice president of the Houston Chamber of Commerce said, "We have some fine support from four universities and the Manned Spacecraft Center." And the Houston *Post* commented editorially, "the presence of the space center enhances Houston's attractiveness. It has contributed greatly to the development of Houston as one of the nation's major centers of scientific research and has helped tremendously to create the sort of community which the laboratory's staff would find congenial and conducive to its work"—which shows how quickly the former have-nots can find new rationales once they have been admitted to the circle of affluence.

As things now stand, because of the large number of proposals, AEC is running a bit behind schedule in its initial screening. It expects, however, within a few days to select what it considers to be the most promising proposals for further screening by the evaluation committee that was established by the National Academy of Sciences (*Science*, 18 June). However, all proposals will be sent to the NAS Committee so that it may look over the entire field. The NAS Committee, chaired by Emanuel I. Piore, vice president and chief scientist at IBM, is expected to report by December at the latest. It may select "three or four or as many as eight or ten" sites as meeting the criteria, according to a commission official. The AEC will then make a choice, probably no later than mid-December, so as to include funds in the budget that will be submitted to Congress in January. What happens then is not certain. The White House will no doubt have a say in this business, and it is not likely that the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy will stay out of it altogether, although its membership is so widely distributed that it would be difficult to use the committee as a vehicle for favoring any one region. Finally, once the final decision is in, it will be interesting to observe the reaction of the 45 states that don't get the accelerator. If the leadership of the scientific community worked like some other segments of our society, the inevitable disappointment of these states might be regarded as a tempting source of potential support for other ventures in federal support of research and development. But there is no indication that anyone is thinking along those lines.

—D. S. GREENBERG

FDA: Scientific, Medical Groups Support Agency in Dispute with Fountain over Access to Drug Data

A congressional investigation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that began over a year ago in low-keyed fashion has recently become the focus of an argument over the rightful limits of legislative inquiry into scientific and medical affairs. The argument finds Representative L. H. Fountain (D–N.C.) in a familiar but not altogether comfortable spot—at odds with a substantial portion of the medical and scientific communities.

Fountain's dispute with the FDA began when the House Government Operations subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations, of which he is chairman, moved from the general considerations which had occupied it for nearly a year to concrete studies of FDA's handling of particular drugs. FDA's policy on giving information to Congress has only one formal limit: FDA may not disclose pharmaceutical industry secrets, such as formulas. For the rest, however, the policy is more or less dependent on political winds. When congressional-executive relations are poor (as, for example, when the Eisenhower administration faced a Democratic Congress), the rule book for executive agencies calls for a certain amount of closeness with agency information. When they are good, as they are at the moment, the word goes out that executive agencies are expected to be open and helpful. Few civil servants enjoy having their official actions prominently displayed before the public, and this openness may go against the bureaucratic grain. (A few years ago, for example, the Food and Drug Administration attempted to have the law changed to enable it to cover a wider