LBJ Directive: He Says Spread the Research Money

President Johnson last week issued a major policy directive on federal support of university-based research, and his science adviser, Donald F. Hornig, followed it up with a prophecy that the directive is going to bring important changes to the academic world.

The presidential statement started with a theme that has become familiar in Congress and many parts of the academic community—that the federal government should pay more attention to the educational side effects of the great sums it spends for research in universities. Moving on to specifics, it directed federal agencies to be more responsive to the have-nots in the increasingly active competition for federal funds. Finally, in harmony with recommendations by the Wooldridge Committee and other groups that have recently examined federal university relations, the President directed federal agencies to give university administrators and researchers more discretion over the use of federal research funds. In a system as massive and sluggish as the multi-agency federal apparatus for supporting university research, it is reasonable to expect that presidential policy will take some time to bestir the operating levels. But when set against the present political background, the implications of the directive take on great significance. And it is clear that Hornig was using carefully considered words when he told the press briefing that the policy directive would slowly, but decisively, reshape many important aspects of the way the federal government supports university research.

The new policy was stated in two documents issued by the White House, one a presidential statement to the Cabinet, entitled "Strengthening the Academic Capability for Science Throughout the Nation"; the other, a memorandum bearing the same title and addressed to the heads of federal departments and agencies. Together, these documents represent the fruition of a debate that has long been going on throughout the complex of people and organizations that manage the science-government relationship. And what they add up to is that Lyndon Johnson and his scientific and educational advisers have decided that basic research has too much impact on the university environment and surrounding geographic regions to permit it to be governed mainly in terms of the desires of its most successful practitioners.

Heretofore, money for university researchers was allocated with fairly strict adherence to the concept that science could be treated as an island in the academic setting. For the first 15 or so years of the postwar period, this concept was scientifically and politically useful, since a Congress that was skittish about supporting education could be told that, in the interest of defense, public health, and other nationally accepted goals, the money was being used to buy nothing but science, and that only the best science was being bought. Eventually, however, it became painfully clear that science could not enjoy unique prosperity without affecting other parts of the academic setting, and, further, that the concentration of scientific capability at a relatively few universities was somehow related to regional economic prosperity. When these themes, especially the latter one, finally soaked into congressional thinking, the components began to come together for stating a public policy to govern a long-accumulated collection of administrative practices. Considering just the amount of money at stake, the matter was sooner or later going to require a high-level declaration of government intent, but it is probable that the Lyndon Johnson reign sped it along, for the President, far more than any of his predecessors, refuses to concede a state of isolation to any segment of American society. In his view, the public process cannot be fragmented, and even the Supreme Court, traditionally and constitutionally aloof from the daily tides of politics, has been brought into the swim, as witness the Chief Justice being

NSF Adds to Its Graduate Traineeship Program

The National Science Foundation announced last week that it is expanding its Graduate Traineeship Program to include biology and the social sciences. The program was begun 2 years ago to assist graduate engineering, and last year mathematics and the physical sciences were added. Colleges and universities must apply to the Foundation by 22 October for grants to support the traineeships at their institutions in the 1966–1967 academic year; recipient institutions will be announced about 15 January. The institutions may then offer grants to students, primarily in the first year of graduate school, in the designated fields. The program will provide stipends for specified numbers of students, and a fixed sum to the institution for each student receiving a grant. About 4100 stipends will be given, with approximately half supported by the new grant.

To be eligible for participation, institutions must offer a continuing doctoral program in at least one of the sciences, although they may request support for other areas, in which they offer only the masters.' Only U.S. schools may participate.

Additional information and instructions to institutions on the preparation of proposals should be sent to the Graduate Traineeship Program, Division of Graduate Education in Science, NSF, Washington, D.C. 20550.