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Geographic Criteria for Grants

One accomplishment of federal research and development has been the geographic spread of science and the rise of the state universities. Though the growth of the state university system has been sustained by legislative support and prompted by the pressure of student enrollment, excellence in science has been fostered by federal research grants. In the Midwest and Northwest, in Texas, California, and increasingly in the Southeast, federal grants to state universities have achieved some counterbalance to the splendid, but criticized, growth of private universities in the Northeast and California.

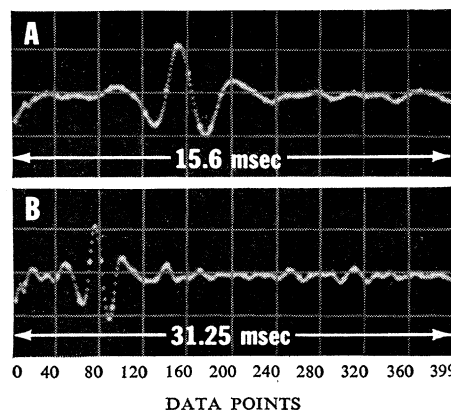
In view of this geographic spread, it is unfitting and illadvised for scientists and administrators to lobby against the regional concentration of research funds or to urge their congressional representatives to insure a wider geographic distribution. Planned geographic distribution inevitably leads to political allocation in which merit and potential become secondary considerations. The aspiring university which pressures Washington for regional development overlooks the aspirations of its weaker neighbors who will inevitably demand their full share. Congressional pressure for geographic distribution of federal research funds in Congress is directly attributable to the demands of university administrators and scientists whose greed has overcome their judgment.

Institutional development programs are being considered by several federal agencies, and a science development program has already been inaugurated by the National Science Foundation. If selection is made by merit and potential, these programs will encourage the rise of new "centers of excellence," which should be concerned with the needs of growing populations and regional development and located only where initiative and quality already exist. Wider eligibility, not geographic distribution, should be the major goal, and university administrators must subordinate their individual interests and unite to protect federal programs from political intrusion. Guidelines can also be set for broader programs of federal support of universities in nonscience fields.

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