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Goals, Priorities, and Dollars

In 1975 the U.S. will spend over \$30 billion for research and development if the projections of *Goals, Priorities, and Dollars** are confirmed. This book, by Leonard Lecht, is the first report of the National Planning Association's Center for Priority Analysis. It projects the amount of money likely to be available for 16 classes of expenditure and the cost of meeting national goals in each class, as those goals have been formulated by legislative enactment, expert studies, or knowledgeable public bodies. The classes are: consumer expenditures and savings, private plant and equipment, urban development, social welfare, health, education, transportation, national defense, housing, research and development, natural resources, international aid, space, agriculture, manpower retraining, and area redevelopment. The listing is in decreasing order of the amounts expected to be spent in 1975.

The U.S. population is expected to increase to 226 million in 1975. For a population of this size, a gross national product (GNP) of \$770 billion will be required to equal 1962 per-capita expenditures for civilian goods, education, health care, and the rest of the 16 areas. The actual GNP for 1975 is likely to be higher—\$981 billion, if Lecht is right in assuming a steady 4-percent-a-year increase from 1962 to 1975. This rate is higher than that in recent years, but he considers it reasonable and attainable. A GNP of \$981 billion will be \$211 billion above the amount necessary to maintain 1962 standards, but it will not be enough to meet in full the goals in all 14 areas. That would require a GNP of \$1127 billion.

The projections give hope of \$211 billion for discretionary use in raising standards above present levels for some or all of the goal areas, and they also give warning that we will fall short by \$146 billion of having enough to satisfy all the aspirations. For research and development, continuation of the 1962 expenditure rate of 3 percent of GNP would provide \$30 billion in 1975, an amount that seems reasonable in light of actual increases from 1962 through 1967. The aspiration level for 1975 is \$39 billion.

Obviously choice will be necessary. Every budget-maker knows this necessity, yet Lecht's calculations help to define the area in which we can maneuver. Moreover, projection of the R & D range and of the size and range of other claims on the GNP strengthen the argument that we need better information on which to base our choices.

Traditionally, individual companies, universities, foundations, government agencies, and congressional committees have each looked at some portion of the total research and development realm. Their individual decisions, made for their individual reasons, collectively determine the national total and distribution of R & D expenditures. We will not depart from this decentralized system, yet we could provide many decision-makers with two kinds of help to make better-informed choices. One is additional, updated, and more refined projections and analyses of the kind Lecht has given us. The other is the clearer formulation of criteria for choice among various scientific and technological alternatives. Choices are inevitable; scientists can lead in establishing the criteria on which they are made, or they can leave this responsibility to others.—DAEL WOLFLE

* Leonard A. Lecht, *Goals, Priorities, and Dollars*, Free Press, New York, 1966, \$2.95.