
Hollomon Leaving Science Post for Presidency at Oklahoma

J. Herbert Hollomon, one of the last "New Frontier" leaders to remain in an executive position in Washington, was named this week to the presidency of the University of Oklahoma at Norman. Hollomon has served as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology for the last 5 years; in the last few months, he also filled the post of Acting Under Secretary of Commerce, the second-ranking position in the Department.

During his time in Washington, Hollomon has been noted for vigorous, and sometimes controversial, exercise of executive responsibility. Hollomon's propensity for innovation, as well as his national reputation and his governmental experience, appealed to the authorities at the university who were looking for a man without close ties to Oklahoma. Hollomon was born in Norfolk, Va., educated at M.I.T., and employed by the General Electric Company in Schenectady, N.Y., for 18 years before moving to Washington.

Beginning 1 September, Hollomon will serve as president-elect of the university; during the academic year he will be free to study the university and to visit other institutions to observe educational procedures. In June 1968, he will succeed George L. Cross, who has been president for the last quarter century. In his new position, Hollomon will be paid more than \$40,000 annually and will be provided with a residence and the use of an airplane.

Before Hollomon joined the government, he was general manager of GE's General Engineering Laboratory where he was paid an annual salary of \$75,000. During the past couple of years, Hollomon has received a number of attractive offers from both industry and universities. Why did he choose a university and why did he pick Oklahoma?

"I had always thought I would go back to a university as a teacher or an officer," Hollomon explained in an interview with *Science*. "I am deeply interested in kids. The university is where the action is in our society." In the past, Hollomon, a metallurgist, has been an instructor in engineering at Harvard and an adjunct professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and has served on advisory committees for Cornell, Harvard, and George Washington University. Hollomon thinks that 5 years is long enough to be responsible for science and technology in Commerce and believes that it is time for someone else to take charge. The idea of accepting a university presidency also appealed to Hollomon because "I have been too closely identified with science and technology; a university is as good a place to break out of the mold as I can think of."

Hollomon said that Oklahoma seemed to offer the most growth potential among the variety of the job offers which he considered. "I don't want to go to a place that is so damn hallowed that you can't change things or is so damn small that it can't be improved," he commented.

Although Hollomon believes that his 5-year stint in Washington is long enough for the present, he says that one of the things he has learned is that "a person has to be here a reasonable length of time to initiate programs. One of the grave problems in government is that technical people don't stay long enough. For instance, I disagree with the 2-year cycle of science advisers in the Interior Department. It takes longer than 2 years to get things accomplished."



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When asked what he regards as his principal achievements in office, Hollomon placed primary emphasis on the increased national attention he feels he has been able to focus on the problems of civilian and industrial technology. Specifically, he takes pride in the creation of the Commerce Technical Advisory Board, in the National Academy of Engineering (which he helped found), and in the heightened concern about the distribution of technical resources across the nation.

Hollomon thinks that the second most important activity during his tenure was the creation of the Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) in 1965, which included "getting the Tiros satellite program off the ground," the World Weather Watch, work in weather modification, and the formation of the Institutes for Environmental Research at Boulder, Colorado. As a third area of achievement, he mentions a redirection in effort and utilization of resources at the Bureau of Standards. "They now know much better what they're supposed to be doing," he said.

More than any specific accomplishment Hollomon believes that the most important personal advantages of his service were "what I learned about the government, and what I learned from the mistakes I made." Hollomon readily says that one of the misjudgments he made in the early part of his term involved a "naïveté about Congress." Without knowing much about the legislative branch, the quick-moving Hollomon tried to get Congress to adopt his Civilian Industrial Technology program, only to have it killed by skeptical legislators (*Science*, 28 June 1963). Hollomon calls that death blow "a very wise decision by Congress" and thinks that the State Technical Services Act eventually passed by Congress is a more promising approach.

Having acquired an increased sophistication about the working of government in his years at Commerce, Hollomon will be of help to the university and the state in acquiring federal funding. Due to the strength of its congressional delegation, Oklahoma occupies a prominent place in the political awareness of federal research administrators. Oklahoma's aggressive junior senator, Fred Harris, has quickly staked out his interest in expanding the flow of federal funds to institutions in inland states such as Oklahoma. With a politically savvy president and a shrewd congressional delegation, the University of Oklahoma will be sure to receive its share of federal attention.

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