

report was the recommendation that a substantial portion of research council funds be transferred from the Department of Education and Science which, has administered them to the customer departments. From the beginning it was clear that the brunt of the reallocations would fall on three of the councils, Agricultural Research, Medical Research, and Natural Environment Research. The Science Research Council, which has the biggest budget of the five (\$130 million), handles basic research making it analogous to NSF in the United States. The Social Science Research Council had a degree of immunity because it is the newest of the councils and has the smallest budget.

Rothschild had called for a transfer in the first year of nearly half of the total annual budgets of ARC, MRC, and NERC, which totals about \$130 million. In the White Paper itself, the transfer schedule was stretched to 3 years, with a step formula starting at \$25 million in the first year.

The reorganization itself, although retaining much of the spirit of Rothschild, followed the Dainton recommendations more closely, both in handling of fund transfers and in important structural details.

The Dainton report, for example, was the source of the design for the new advisory board demanded by the White Paper. This is the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC, or "ABRa Cadabra" to research council wits). The membership of the board is much more cross-sectional than that of the parochial CSP which it replaces—representatives from the chief customer departments, from the office of the Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government and from industry sit on it too—and would seem to have a chance of setting priorities for civil science with some authority.

If the customer/contractor principle is to succeed in practice, a lot depends on another main element in Rothschild's prescription—enhancement of the role and in some places creation of the post of "chief scientist" in the customer departments. The chief scientist and his staff are to have major responsibility for matching the R & D needs of the departments with the research capabilities of the universities and other potential contractors.

Rothschild seems to have had in mind as a model the "shop" run by the chief scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defence, Sir Herman Bondi. Like

departments handling civil aviation and nuclear energy matters, the Defence Ministry has a lot of experience with the customer/contractor principle. Whether the new chief scientists will be given the staff and the status in the civil departments to enable them to

achieve the customer/contractor "partnership" envisioned by Rothschild may well be the make-or-break question for the reorganization.

Certainly there are misgivings over whether this blueprint is appropriate for civil research. These are perhaps

FASEB Blocks Petitioners

In December 1970, the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), a scientists' public interest lobby, issued a statement criticizing radical scientists for disrupting the AAAS annual meeting and criticizing the AAAS for permitting the disruptions.

Now the FAS is criticizing the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) for going too far in the other direction by prohibiting FAS from distributing a petition at FASEB's annual meeting, which was held on 15–20 April in Atlantic City.

The petition, protesting proposed budget cuts for biomedical research and training, has already been sent to about 40,000 scientists, says FAS director Jeremy J. Stone. The FAS was planning to follow up by sending some of its members to quietly distribute the petition in hotel corridors. Officials of FASEB nixed this idea on the grounds that it is against their policy to have people swarming the halls with pamphlets and sandwich boards.

Subsequent negotiations broke down after FASEB agreed to allow FAS to set up tables for the petitions, but refused to let anyone from FAS man them. Stone said this was silly, because no one would pay attention to the petitions if there were no one there to explain what it was all about. The FAS executive committee thereupon decided that the issue of free speech was more important than circulating the petition, and FAS issued a press release stressing "the obligation of scientific organizations to avoid needless and unjustifiable restraints on the political activity of scientists."

The release contends that, as long as the activity stays in the hotel corridors, it is up to the hotel, rather than the meeting organizers, to decide whether it is disruptive.

Eugene L. Hess, executive director of FASEB, says FAS could not be accommodated because it made its request too late for it to be included in the meeting program. He added that allowing FAS people to post themselves outside meeting rooms would make for too much congestion. Any scholarly group could book a room and set up displays if they made their plans known well enough in advance, he said. But Stone "wanted to have his own set of rules." (Another group concerned with Soviet treatment of Jewish scientists was also turned down for the same reasons.)

Hess said that FASEB was sticking to its policy throughout the meeting and has no particular plans to change.

Apparently the sprawling structure of FASEB, which is made up of six constituent societies, is partially responsible for this display of inflexibility. There seems to have been no way of getting all six directors to agree on loosening up the policy in time for the meeting.

Stone finds it ironic that FASEB should try to block the FAS effort, since the petition was in the interests of anyone concerned about biomedical research and FAS is one of the few non-tax-exempt organizations in a position to influence legislators. He also emphasized that it was time scientific organizations developed some sensible guidelines that would permit political expression at meetings without allowing it to get out of hand. While Hess insisted that any responsible group could have a voice at the meeting if it planned far enough ahead, it would appear that this policy rules out possibly constructive spontaneous political activity.—C.H.