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## Power in Washington

From time to time scientists inquire about why their needs and their opinions seem to receive little attention in Washington. There are many reasons. One is the climate of the times. Another is that scientists compete with increasing demands of others who have converged on the capital, all seeking to achieve or obtain something.

The past decade has seen a tremendous concentration of power in Washington and a large increase in the number of those in a position to use it. In Washington, power usually accompanies control over money, and the pots of gold are many. First, there is the \$500-billion federal budget. A piece of that is worth fighting for. Less visible, but perhaps more important, are regulatory decisions that can determine the prosperity or destruction of major industries. For example, radio and television stations are licensed by the federal government, and renewals come up every 3 years. Another set of decisions has to do with foreign dumping of products. Power over industry is illustrated by the fact that the making of steel entails compliance with 5700 regulations. Virtually all of them have some effect on the ability of the industry to compete, to survive, and to be profitable.

In dealing with agencies of the federal government, lawyers are usually the chosen instrument. Some 700 lawyers make a comfortable living for their efforts involving the Federal Communications Commission. I have made inquiries about the total number of lawyers participating in government matters; no one seems to know. The membership of the Washington Bar Association is about 25,000; a major part of this group deals with the government. In addition, a large number of lawyers appear from around the country, and some of the local lawyers who work on government matters are not members of the Washington bar.

The power center that is Washington has attracted an ever-increasing number of organizations seeking to influence what goes on here. A partial enumeration of these organizations is to be seen in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book. Some 1900 organizations are listed under the heading "Associations." Some are local or small or not particularly concerned with government. But others are large and active. Examples include the Air Line Pilots Association, the National Coal Association, and the National Education Association. In addition, many organizations, such as public interest groups, labor unions, trade organizations, and corporations, engage in efforts to influence the government.

Whom do the tens of thousands of would-be influencers work on? Many, of course, would like to have the ear of the President or, failing that, of the Vice President, the White House staff, or a Cabinet officer. On the executive side of the government, most have to be content with civil servants, who by their sheer numbers and by their duties have enormous total power. On Capitol Hill there are many targets in addition to senators and representatives. A recent count shows 20,000 people on various congressional staffs. The majority are aides to congressmen; others are on staffs of committees. For example, the Senate Judiciary Committee has a staff of about 300.

In addition to contact with the Administration and Congress, the influencers work effectively in other ways. A prime target is the media, which are vulnerable to skillfully prepared material and responsive to the right kinds of press conferences.

One approach to influencing any particular issue in Congress is to identify the relevant key members of Congress and the people in their home districts who influence them. Means are then found to intercede with the congressmen at a crucial moment just before the votes are taken. This technique involves knowing when legislation is likely to mature and the key people involved, timing, computer printouts of information, and many telephone calls. When billions of dollars are at stake, a commensurate effort is indicated. With that kind of game preoccupying Washington, scientists should feel fortunate that they obtain as much attention as they do.

—PHILIP H. ABELSON