

LETTERS

OSTP: The Last 4 Years

An article entitled "Frank Press's number game" (News and Comment, 24 Oct., p. 406), suggests that Frank Press and his staff at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) may have distorted budget data in order to overstate President Carter's record in support of basic research. Fairness requires me to clarify the record about the data on the Administration's support for basic research and Press's testimony before my subcommittee on 19 September.

Subsequent to the hearing, information was provided to the subcommittee by the OSTP which confirmed that the growth of support for basic research in constant 1972 dollars between fiscal years 1979 and 1981 (March) was slight, as was also reported in Willis Shapley's analysis for the AAAS. Press's testimony indicated, however, that the Carter Administration's 4-year record, that is, for fiscal years 1978-1982, would exhibit real growth in basic research of 11 percent. From the information I now have, it appears this increase depends largely on the new funding for fiscal years 1981 and 1982 promised in the President's August 1980 economic message.

I don't question Press's good faith, nor the intentions of the Carter Administration. But the record of support for basic research in 1981 and 1982 will now depend on the Reagan Administration and the new Congress.

The real message of the budget figures is that, while support for basic research was increasing significantly in current dollars under President Carter, the impact of inflation cut away those gains.

The relationship between Press and my subcommittee has been close, cordial, and mutually supportive. Press made the most of a difficult, understaffed assignment and deserves the gratitude of all who attach a high priority to the health of science in the United States.

ADLAI E. STEVENSON
Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510

The Office of Science and Technology Policy has received some comment in recent letters to the editor (21 Nov., p. 846). I wish to add something on a positive note. During the last 4 years there has been important interaction established by the OSTP with the industrial research community. Furthermore, this interaction was carried out without any

adversarial relationship, which sometimes obtains in the interaction between industry and some federal agencies. The interactions were frequent and led to involvement of many industrial researchers in activities such as the Domestic Policy Review on Technological Innovation. We in the industrial R & D community feel that our voice has been heard and that we have made a contribution. We do not represent a single narrow interest, but a broad spectrum of industrial science and technology important to the economy of the United States.

We trust that this relationship may continue with the incoming presidential science adviser.

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Chestnut Blight

American plant pathologists who are seeking a control for chestnut blight (Research News, 22 Aug., p. 892) must objectively examine two aspects of the French literature on hypovirulence (1, 2). Foremost are the subjective statements by Grente and Berthelay-Sauret (1) that there is a direct relationship between the relative recovery of blight cankers on European chestnuts in Italy and the relative abundance of strains of the fungus with infectious hypovirulence. These statements are the basis for the hypothesis that an infectious hypovirulence agent is the mechanism for biological control of chestnut blight in Europe. If this direct relationship exists, objective experimental data should be presented to confirm it.

A second problem is the absence of experimental data in reports (2) of the successful control of the blight on European chestnuts in French orchards. To confirm that a control treatment is effective, the treatment must be compared with suitable check treatments. The French reports do not indicate any such comparisons were made. In the absence of check treatments, there is no basis for establishing the relative effectiveness of a control treatment.

Infectious hypovirulence in a plant parasitic fungus is not unique to the chestnut blight fungus *Endothia parasitica*. Lindberg (3) reported hypovirulence in *Helminthosporium sativum* in 1959. Recently it was reported in *Rhizoctonia solani* and *Gaumanomyces graminis* (4). Although these authors have speculated that hypovirulence may provide biological control, they have not

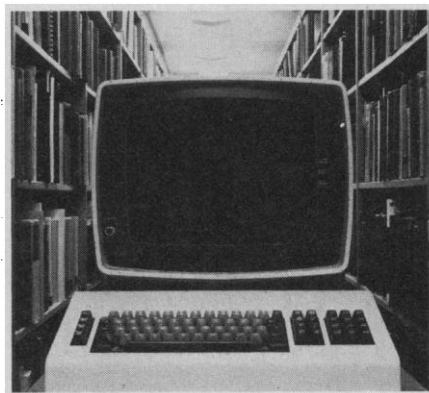
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