Science Finds a Place in the Transition

Task force on science and technology on tap to answer questions; co-chairman, Bueche, moves to transition team as a coordinator

Arthur M. Bueche, General Electric's senior vice president for corporate technology, has joined President-elect Ronald Reagan's transition team as a full-time member of the policy coordination staff. Bueche is already co-chairman of the Reagan task force for science and technology and his presence on the headquarters staff gives the task force a direct link with the transition organization.

The science and technology task force, whose other co-chairman is Simon Ramo, a founder of TRW, Inc., evolved from a campaign advisory committee. It is one of more than a score of advisory panels proposing policy on a range of subjects for the Administration to be.

Arthur M. Bueche

The advice being generated should be viewed in the foreshortened perspective of the transition. The first order of business is to pick people for top echelon jobs. In the case of science and technology, the choice of key appointees will have to wait until major Cabinet posts are filled and the White House staff takes shape. Ramo's name has been mentioned prominently as a candidate for the President's science adviser, but apparently the obligatory making of lists of prospects for the job has not yet even begun. It is worth recalling that the outgoing science adviser, Frank Press, was not nominated until 2 months after the Carter inauguration.

With these caveats noted, some clues to policy can be gleaned from the choice of advisers. The new Administration obviously expects to get recommendations that it will find congenial, and the views of the science and technology task force members are hardly unknown.

A majority of the 15 members (*Science*, 21 November) come from the upper ranks of industry and have extensive experience in the federal advisory apparatus, on both military and civilian sides. The group includes two former science advisers, Edward E. David, president of Exxon Research and Engineering, and H. Guyford Stever, chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' Assembly of Engineering, and also a past president of the academy, Frederick Seitz.

Several members of the task force served on two White House ad hoc science advisory committees set up by Gerald Ford during his truncated presidency. The two panels operated pending reestablishment of formal science advisory machinery in the White House after a Nixon-engineered hiatus. Ramo chaired and Bueche and David served on a panel on contributions of technology to economic strength. William O. Baker, former chairman of the board of Bell Laboratories, who also is on the current task force, chaired a panel on anticipated advances in science and technology. Other members of the present task force who served on the Baker panel were Seitz and Edward Teller, long influential as a nuclear weapons scientist and government adviser. Task force members say that their discussions have reflected a continuity of interest from the earlier period.

Ramo says that members of the task force agreed not to talk in public about issues discussed in their meetings. There have been reports in the press, however, purporting to describe the recommendations. Group members told *Science* that the major proposals are still in preliminary form, but they say that recommendations will probably be made in the following areas.

A major concern of the task force is the decline in U.S. economic growth and recommendations to encourage innovation and to improve productivity in industry are expected. Measures to relieve the burden of federal regulation on industry are seen as important. Indirect methods of stimulating innovation such as investment tax credits and revised depreciation rules will be encouraged, rather than direct federal involvement in programs to spur innovation.

In the defense sphere, the decline in support of university research by defense agencies is regarded as adversely affecting the vitality of military R & D. The panel is likely to urge that repair of the relationship, begun during the Carter Administration, be pushed further.

The science advisory apparatus in the White House is seen as needing a major overhaul. The task force is likely to recommend that the office of the President's science adviser be strengthened and that better ways be found to tap the talents of top-flight scientists and engineers in industry and the universities. A call for revival in some form of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) seems probable.

The task force's product will not be confined to a single, comprehensive report. Ramo says the panel is trying to be useful in a variety of ways. For example, he says, it became evident early that the task force could be helpful to the transition team by responding promptly to questions involving science and technology when they came up. Comments on such issues are forwarded to the transition organization as the need arises. Ultimately, says Ramo, the recommendations will be integrated and, presumably, released, but the transitions staff will have responsibility for that.

Ramo and other members of the task force have been drawn into the time-consuming, high-pressure task of filling jobs in the new Administration. Not only do they consult with transition staff handling personnel matters but task force members have been deluged with résumés and supplications from hopeful job seekers.

The science and technology task force operates under the aegis of the main transition staff directed by Edwin Meese III, Reagan's top staff man. The science and technology panel reports to Darrell M. Trent, director of policy coordination for the transition team. Trent, a Columbia MBA, had business experience and served in the Nixon White House and in other Administration posts before join-

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ing the Hoover Institution at Stanford, where he has been a senior fellow and an associate director. Bueche, on leave from GE, will serve as a policy coordinator for science and technology on Trent's staff. Bueche was unavailable for comment.

Another set of transition teams are operating at the agency level. These are "fact gathering" groups following guidelines set by the transition organization's deputy director William E. Timmons, who was a top congressional liaison man in the Nixon White House.

The guidelines direct that each team identify problem areas for their agencies and describe early decisions that will have to be made. Also, reports on budget, personnel, policy, and the status of legislation are asked for. The aim is to inform leading Administration officials and assist Reagan appointees who will take over.

The National Science Foundation has been assigned a team so high powered that NSF staff seem a little overwhelmed. Headed by former NASA administrator and present University of Utah president James Fleecher, the team includes three members of the science and technology task force—David, Seitz and Stever. Other members are Ray Biplinghoff, a former NASA and NSF official who is now an industry executive, and Donna Fitzpatrick, an attorney in a Washington law firm and former science teacher. Sending a slight frisson through the Washington education community is the presence on the team of George Archibald, a congressional staffer who was formerly an assistant to former Arizona Congressman John Conlan, a scathing critic of NSF school curriculum development programs and peer review practices.

The team assessing the National Institutes of Health is headed by David A. Winston, minority staff director of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Much of the information gathering at NIH is being done by Mary Frances Lowe, a member of the staff of Senator Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.). Both Winston and Lowe have worked for Schweiker, and this suggests that there may be substance to rumors that Schweiker, who retired from the Senate this year, could be the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, the parent agency of NIH.

Concerning science and technology policy, it is easier to predict what will be recommended than what will actually be implemented by a Reagan Administration. Reagan himself has evinced no particular fascination for science and technology. David suggests that the President-elect is interested in the practical implications of science and technology, for example, for defense or the economy. The Reagan Administration view is likely to be that government should support science and technology when tied to a specific mission—defense, space, health—but should leave alone or get out of things appropriately done by the private sector.

From the choice of advisers, it appears that science and technology policy is not a source of conservative-versus-moderate tensions in the Republican camp, as some other issues are. Several members of the task force in fact were identified earlier with GOP liberal Nelson Rockefeller who had a penchant for pushing science in government. It now seems that a friendly, if frankly more utilitarian attitude toward science and technology will prevail in the new Administration. Speculation on just how that will work itself out in appointments, policies, and budgets is at this point just that.

—JOHN WALSH

Senator Schmitt, New Science Power

Republican Senator opposes synfuels program, calls Carter's science office "emasculated"

Senator Harrison Schmitt (R-N.M.), the Harvard-educated geologist and astronaut, has suddenly become the most important figure in the Senate for science and technology. Ronald Reagan's landslide shifted the majority in the Senate into Republican hands. With the shift, many Republicans who have led a fairly obscure existence now find themselves running committees.

Schmitt will take control of the Commerce subcommittee on science, technology and space, an overseeing and authorizing body formerly chaired by Adlai Stevenson III (D-Ill.). Schmitt also has acquired the chairmanship of the Appropriations subcommittee on labor and health, education, and welfare. It controls the budget of the National Institutes of Health, among other agencies. Schmitt will not chair, but will sit on the Appropriations subcommittee on the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the independent agencies, which controls the budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF). That subcommittee will not be chaired by Charles Mathias (R.-Md.), who was expected to take over. (He is counted as a friend of the NSF.) The subcommittee will be chaired instead by Jake Garn (R-Utah), whose views on science matters are as yet unknown.

But Schmitt has asked the new majority leader, Howard Baker (R-Tenn.), to add to Schmitt's science empire by shifting the authorization responsibility for the NSF into the Commerce subcommittee that Schmitt chairs. That responsibility now lies in the Labor subcommittee on health, chaired until recently by Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). Baker is considering the request.

In an interview with *Science* on 5 December, Schmitt placed himself squarely among the economic moderates in the new Administration. He said it would be a mistake to jolt the economy now with the kind of "shock treatment" being advocated by such Reagan advisers as Representative Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.). Schmitt opposes Kemp's plan, which would try to stimulate economic growth by reducing personal income taxes massively and by cutting the federal budget. This policy of "cutting wherever there is money to cut," Schmitt said, might produce a brief spurt of growth, but not the huge investments in new technology which will be required over the long term to make the economy productive.

Schmitt recognizes that Reagan's promise to increase defense spending while reducing taxes implies large budget cuts. But he does not favor drastic measures. He thinks that many of Reagan's advisers appreciate the value of government support for research and development, and he thinks they will be pre-

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