More Shots in the Budget Battle

OMB has tried to protect research support, but several related programs and demonstration projects would be slashed

The first installment of President Reagan's controversial economic program, which was finally unveiled on 18 February, calls for sweeping budget cuts that include some science programs. But it also contains tax proposals that would provide incentives for industrial R&D and innovation. Lack of such tax breaks was the major criticism leveled by business spokesmen at the innovation program announced in 1979 by Carter science adviser Frank Press.

The budget proposals, contained in a 300-page book that Reagan delivered to Congress along with his message on the sorry state of the economy, would chop about $35 billion from projected federal spending in fiscal year (FY) 1982. Another round of fiscal bloodletting, adding up to $6 billion to $7 billion, will be announced on 10 March.

Many of the proposed cuts were outlined in a "black book" that was drawn up early in February by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and widely leaked in advance of Reagan's message (*Science*, 27 February). But last week's list contains a few new targets and indicates that some last-minute changes were made before the proposals were made public.

Administration officials have said that, in making cuts in the federal science agencies, they have tried to preserve programs that directly support R&D while slashing areas considered less important to the agencies' central missions. The Administration is also proposing to shift the federal government out of many programs that it believes should be funded by private industry, a move that represents a sharp break with the Carter Administration's policies in areas such as solar energy and energy conservation.

The following are the chief additions to and changes in the black book's proposals for science and technology. All must be approved by Congress.

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) would suffer only modest reductions from the levels of support proposed by the Carter Administration, but its budget would not keep pace with inflation. The brunt of the cuts would be borne by NIH's research training programs. The Reagan proposals would provide $3.518 billion for NIH in FY 1981, an increase of only 4 percent over last year's level, and $3.764 billion in FY 1982. Congress traditionally adds to the Administration's budget request for NIH, however, so these figures should not be regarded as Gospel.
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has won at least a temporary reprieve for the Galileo mission to Jupiter. OMB's black book proposals would have eliminated the program, but some money was restored to the budget shortly before Reagan's economic message. The Administration is now asking for $6.2 billion for NASA in FY 1982, about $500 million less than Carter proposed. The space shuttle would continue to enjoy top priority because of its military applications, according to Administration officials. The Large Space Telescope would also receive full funding, but several other missions would have to be deferred. NASA will pay a price for Galileo's reprieve, however. OMB is becoming concerned

Science Adviser Post in Doubt

The Reagan Administration is having doubts about the need for a science adviser in the White House, and it is considering transferring to another agency the functions performed by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), according to several sources.

White House officials began to question the need for a science adviser's office late last week, during a review of the procedures for channeling advice to the president. No firm decisions had been reached when *Science* went to press, but several options were said to be under discussion.

Until last week, there was every indication that a science adviser would eventually be installed. The science task force, headed by TRW executive Simon Ramo and General Electric research chief Arthur Bueche, which advised the incoming Administration on science policy matters, had strongly recommended that an appointment be made as soon as possible. Members of the task force say that their suggestion met with agreement from Reagan's close advisers, and several candidates have even been approached for the job.

One reason for the apparent change of mind is that when senior White House officials got round to examining the operational role of OSTP, they were not convinced that it would fit easily into the White House's decision-making processes. They then began to examine alternative ways of providing science advice to the President.

If the science adviser's role is downgraded or scrapped, it will cause an outcry in the scientific community, and there will also be protests from Capitol Hill. OSTP was established by legislation, and congressional action would thus be required to dismantle it. Senator Jack Schmitt (R–N.M.), who chairs a Senate subcommittee that oversees OSTP, told *Science* in an interview last year that he, for one, would resist any move to emasculate or abolish the office. "Science and technology are too important for this country not to have a science adviser at the same level as the national security adviser," he said, adding that if Reagan does not recognize the importance of the office, "then a lot of us are going to have to do everything we can to convince him."

Bueche also expressed consternation about the apparent change of mind in the White House. "It is inconceivable," he said, "that the President can make the necessary policy decisions and tradeoffs without the best technical advice he can get."

Another task force member said that so far Reagan himself has not been involved in the discussions over the fate of OSTP, but efforts were made to reach him in California last week.—COLIN NORMAN

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about cost overruns and budget problems in NASA's space science programs, and a full-scale review of the space agency's priorities can be expected when the Administration finally appoints a new chief for NASA.

● Funding for nuclear and high-energy physics by the Department of Energy (DOE) would be moderately reduced, leading to "a temporary stretch-out of new construction, a general decrease in operating level and utilization, a general reduction in the level of experimentation for medium energy nuclear physics, nuclear medicine and life sciences, and deferrals of new accelerator construction at universities."

In spite of cries of protest from some scientists, the black book proposals for the National Science Foundation (NSF) have not been changed. NSF's science education, international, women's, and minorities programs are scheduled for radical surgery. Support for the social and behavioral sciences would be sharply reduced, while support for the physical sciences and engineering would be left untouched. A $75 million program to upgrade scientific instruments at colleges and universities would be deferred, as would plans to build a 25-m telescope in Hawaii.

Proposals to slash DOE's solar energy and energy conservation programs also remain unchanged. The Reagan budget calls for reductions of 60 percent and 75 percent, respectively, from the Carter Administration's proposals for these programs in FY 1982. Direct federal support for demonstration projects to produce synthetic fuels from coal, shale, and biomass, would also be cut back severely.

Conspicuously absent from the budget proposals submitted last week were DOE's nuclear energy programs. These were still under negotiation when the economic message was sent to Congress, but there are indications that some programs will be favored with large increases.

Also missing were detailed proposals for the Department of Defense, although Reagan promised to add $7.2 billion to the defense budget in FY 1982 and to increase the military's share of the budget from 24 percent this year to 32 percent in 1984.

Reagan's tax proposals, which face a tough trial on Capitol Hill, would permit corporations to write off expenditures on R&D equipment in 3 years, and these expenditures would be eligible for an investment tax credit of 6 percent instead of the 3.33 percent allowed under current laws.

Other machinery and equipment could be written off in 5 years under Reagan's proposals, with half the value deductible in the first 2 years. This would greatly accelerate the existing schedules under which corporations can claim tax deductions for new investments. Business executives have long argued for such tax changes to spur new investment, but they are unlikely to be satisfied with Reagan's proposals. Some business groups are already beginning to lobby for substantial tax credits for the conduct of R&D, in addition to the proposals for R&D equipment.

Reagan's economic proposals are clearly just the opening volley in what will be a long and bloody budget battle that will continue for many months.

—COLIN NORMAN

Women in Science Cut

National Science Foundation programs intended to help open careers in science to women are included in the list of major spending cuts put forward by President Reagan.

Consigned to the ax are two newly mandated programs regarded as the most significant so far in assisting women to establish independent careers in research. These provide visiting professorships for women in science and technology and research opportunity grants designed to get women started or restarted in research.

The cuts Reagan proposed follow recommendations made by budget director David A. Stockman. For this year, $6 million in "cross-directorate" funds had been allocated to the new programs. Other women-in-science and minorities programs are administered by the NSF science education directorate which is also scheduled for deep cuts.

The two new women-in-science initiatives won the blessings of Congress in 1980 after an effort of several years led by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D–Mass.). Since the Democrats lost control of the Senate, a key role in women-in-science matters has passed to Senator Orrin Hatch (R–Utah), new chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over NSF policy matters. Hatch supported the women-in-science initiatives in the House-Senate conference after negotiating a substantial paring down of provisions with Kennedy. Hatch is said to be favorably disposed to the new NSF programs, and his attitude could bolster their fortunes as Congress deals with Reagan's budget.

A good deal of confusion surrounds questions of how the Administration will proceed in seeking reductions (rescission) in funds already authorized and appropriated for this year. Technicalities abound. In the case of the new women-in-science programs, for example, funds were, in effect, voted as a proportion of the total research fund package for NSF, not as a separate item that would be easier to cut.

Within the NSF, preparations to put the new programs into effect did not go smoothly. A main problem was translating the language of the law into eligibility rules that would not restrict participation unduly.

Women's groups, which strongly support the programs, charge a lingering reluctance on the part of NSF officials to see "targeted" programs, such as the women-in-science initiatives, operate in NSF research directorates. They are said to oppose targeted programs on grounds of a clash with traditional NSF criteria of scientific excellence determined by peer review.

There is also concern, shared by some women on NSF's policy-making National Science Board, that these programs would be perceived as conferring inferior status on participants. At the NSB meeting on 16 January, Marian E. Koshland, professor of bacteriology and immunology at the University of California, Berkeley, while endorsing the purposes of the program said, "many women would prefer not to have this award, because it could be viewed as a second-class citizenship award."

Other reactions are less ambivalent. Commenting on the threat to the new NSF women-in-science programs posed by the Stockman hit list, an officer of a professional women's organization that had campaigned hard for the programs, observed, "This overdue remedy has become an easy target because it was implemented long after it should have been."—JOHN WALSH

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