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## Federal Policy for Basic Research

The Sixth Annual AAAS Colloquium on R & D and Public Policy, held on 25 and 26 June, was an important event at a crucial time. It brought together from across this country several hundred scientists and engineers from academia, industry, and government to interact with policy makers in the Administration and Congress. The House of Representatives on those dates was in the midst of considering a major budget-cutting measure. The discussions at the colloquium did not directly affect the voting on the Hill but are likely to influence later decisions, for example, on funding of science education by the National Science Foundation.

As has been customary, AAAS staff prepared good introductory material for the colloquium in the form of a 162-page volume analyzing the 1982 budget for R & D.\* The analysis compares the Carter and Reagan budgets for 1982 and data for earlier years. Detailed budgets for the various agencies conducting R & D are presented. A less comprehensive but useful estimate of R & D expenditures by industry is included.

Key members of the Administration and Congress who addressed the colloquium included George Keyworth, II, director-designate of the Office of Science and Technology Policy; Glenn R. Schleede, executive associate director of the Office of Management and Budget; and Murray L. Weidenbaum, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. In the discussion period following each talk there were lively comments that gave the audience and the speakers abundant exposure to the many concerns of the scientific and engineering communities.

Some of the speakers at the colloquium delivered their talks from notes, but the three Administration participants named above brought texts of their remarks. These are to be regarded as statements of Administration policy. In all three texts there were assertions that the Reagan Administration is aware of the importance of basic research. The Administration argues that, if given favorable tax treatment, industry will increase its share of basic research activities. However, there is a realization that government funding is required. Weidenbaum said that "economists are well aware that . . . most areas of basic research still require public support. . . . This is because basic research is so risky, and because the discoveries it may make are not easily converted to rewards for individual entrepreneurs. Any sensible policy towards science must recognize the essential role of basic research as the foundation of our economic program, and the concomitant need to give it public as well as private financial support."

Schleede stated that "the Administration is continuing to support basic research particularly in the natural sciences and engineering because such research results in the advancement of science that underlies long-term economic growth." Keyworth made similar remarks: "The Administration views basic research as a vital investment with a good return. That investment is a Federal responsibility, but one that must be shared by the private sector."

Keyworth made a good impression on his audience, both in his presentation and in the discussion period. He will be in no position to be "science's man" in the White House, and he bluntly said, "It is to the decided advantage of the science and engineering communities to have a Presidential adviser that is looked upon by the White House, not as a political pleader for those communities . . . but as an objective adviser who can act as an effective link to them." Keyworth has set for himself the role of a team member. "The contributions of the science adviser to specific policies or programs may not be identifiable or visible; nevertheless, they will be there. Working in this way the science adviser and his office will best serve the President, the broader goals of science and technology, and, most important, the needs of the country."—PHILIP H. ABELSON

\*W. H. Shapley, A. H. Teich, G. J. Breslow, *Research & Development: AAAS Report VI*, AAAS, Washington, D.C., 1981. xv + 162 pp., \$7.50.