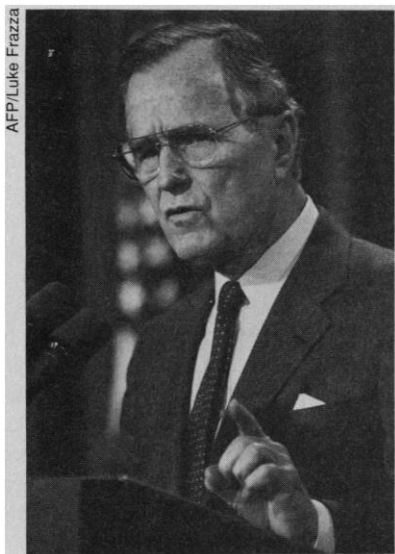


# AAAS Meeting Opens With Views From the Top

*The annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science returned to Washington, D.C., last week for the first time since 1982. The mixture of scientists, journalists, and members of the public who converged on the nation's capital heard sessions on everything from the intricacies of U.S. science policy to the aperiodic oscillations of musical instruments. A complete report of the meeting will appear in the 1 March issue of Science—here is a brief glimpse of some of the opening day's activities.*



## Science and Real Politik

The Persian Gulf War made its presence felt in various ways at last week's AAAS annual meeting: overtly in the sessions on national security, less obviously in the empty seats allotted to several foreign speakers who decided not to travel because of the threat of terrorism. But the most direct intrusion of the war came on the first full day, Friday 15 February, in the keynote address by President George Bush. Departing from his prepared text on science policy, Bush used the occasion to present his first public response to a statement broadcast from Baghdad suggesting that Iraq might be prepared to withdraw from Kuwait. Bush called the Iraqi statement "a cruel hoax" that had falsely raised world hopes for peace.

After the initial jolt of *real politik*, Bush launched into a paean to science. "One of our highest priorities is basic research, especially by the individual scientist or a small team," he declared, pointing to his Administration's commitment to doubling the budget for the National Science Foundation. He also noted that his budget proposals contain funds for new facilities needed in a variety of scientific disciplines, including "nuclear accelerators in physics, telescopes

in astronomy, a strong space science program at NASA, and the human genome project in biology." Bush highlighted his proposals to increase support for math and science education, and tipped his hat to the AAAS education effort, Project 2061, for "working where all lasting change must occur—at the local level to transform the teaching of math and science."

A political counterpoint to Bush's upbeat assessment of his budget came later in the day at a plenary lecture by Representative George E. Brown, Jr. (D-CA), chairman of the House Space, Science and Technology Committee. While supporting the president's proposed increases for NASA and NSF, Brown criticized the Administration for cutting back on high-technology development efforts, such as the Advanced Technology Program at the National Institute of Standards and Technology and a variety of programs funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Brown argued that ATP and DARPA "embody the type of innovative strategies required to revitalize our science and technology base." He added that if science and technology is to be "a crucial factor in our economic strength," as Bush asserted in his speech, the government will have to do more to help bring scientific results out of the lab and into the marketplace.

That Bush made his speech at all was something of a coup for AAAS officials, but it wasn't easy. The talk was originally scheduled for Thursday night, 14 February, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel, where the meeting was being held. But White House officials asked that the time be shifted to 10 a.m. on Friday. Then, to fit in with Bush's schedule for the rest of the day, they asked for a new location—the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House—with a closed circuit television link to the Sheraton ballroom (at a cost of around \$10,000 to AAAS). And then it was rescheduled to 9:30 a.m., only to be delayed 28 minutes—presumably to allow the president time to finish writing his new remarks on Iraq. ■ JOSEPH PALCA

## Lederman and His Critics

A report calling for more money for scientific research would hardly seem likely to touch off a controversy within the scientific community. But a document prepared by physicist Leon M. Lederman for the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has done just that. Lederman's report, *Science: The End of the Frontier?*, received a relatively tepid endorsement from the AAAS board last week, and it came in for criticism from some speakers at the AAAS annual meeting.

Lederman, president-elect of the AAAS, conducted an anecdotal survey of 250 scientists at 30 research universities and concluded that "all is far from well in the laboratories of our research universities." (see *Science*, 11 January, p. 153.) To relieve the "acute problems in academic research" Lederman proposed doubling the approximately \$10 billion the federal government spends on academic research.

There was little disagreement at the meeting with Lederman's conclusion that scientists are facing tough financial times. But Robert M. Rosenzweig, president of the Association of American Universities, told a meeting session that he could not imagine "how any serious person...[could] fail to understand that in the short run, at least, there is simply not enough public money to do everything that ought to be done in the public sector." Rosenzweig argued that a more realistic approach to easing the strain on the scientific community would be to make a strong case for more money to Congress and the White House, while at the same time setting priorities for how to use what money there is.

In his plenary lecture later that day Representative George E. Brown, Jr. (D-CA), chairman of the House Space, Science and Technology Committee, also expressed concern about the Lederman report's approach. Brown said that while he was in fundamental agreement with Lederman's conclusions, he worried that the report made scientists appear like just another self-serving special interest group. "If we are to justify the privileged treatment of research and development by the federal government...then we must present a case that is based not on the frustration and discomfort of individual scientists."

The AAAS board, in a statement released 14 February, did not adopt Lederman's suggestion for doubling research funds. It did, however, commend Lederman for his leadership in bringing the financial problems facing the scientific community to the attention of the nation and promised to keep the issue in the public eye. ■ J.P.