

Be It Resolved: Ups and Downs in the Making of AAAS Resolutions

Three weeks before the 16 December meeting in Washington, D.C., of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Committee on Council Affairs (CCA), all is quiet. Too quiet, some might say.

The CCA acts as the executive committee for the Council, the 83-member body that establishes the general policies guiding AAAS actions. CCA meets once a year in the fall to set the agenda for the full Council gathering at the AAAS annual meeting in February.

Among other matters, the CCA is responsible for screening whatever resolutions have been proposed by AAAS sections or members. However, this year only one proposed resolution graces the committee's "new business" file (the deadline for submissions was 8 November).

The paucity of suggested resolutions at this stage of the approval process "is unusual," says Gretchen Seiler of the AAAS Executive Office, which coordinates governance activities. "There are typically about three resolutions up for consideration at this point."

Resolutions are one way for the Council to speak in a collective voice on issues of importance to the scientific community. Some have proven more contentious than others, including AAAS's support for the humane use of animals in research (1990), opposition to the inclusion of creationism in science curricula (1972 and 1982), and a call for the cessation of herbicide use in the Vietnam War (1969).

Other resolutions that many expected to be ideological battlegrounds have passed muster

with barely an argument. Last year's resolution calling for an end to federal bans preventing research into the medical uses of RU486—the so-called abortion pill—did prompt at least one AAAS Fellow to resign his 30-year membership in AAAS.

But many others have written AAAS to praise its RU486 position, and the generation of the resolution itself inspired "remarkably little debate," says Victor McKusick, M.D., of Johns Hopkins University, retiring chair of the AAAS Section for Medical Sciences, which co-sponsored the proposal with the Section on Biological Sciences.

AAAS sections are most likely to draft resolutions these days.

"Committees such as the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility used to generate many of the resolutions" proposing new AAAS action, says AAAS archivist Michele Aldrich. "But now AAAS has more programs in areas like science education and human rights" that were once the subjects of committee resolutions.

There is also a tendency toward more Board resolutions, as opposed to those that are taken up by the Council, says Aldrich. "I think it has to do with the accelerating rate of change in the scientific world," she says. The 13-member Board of Directors meets five times a year, and can therefore respond more quickly to scientific policy matters of pressing concern.

An example is the Board resolution passed in October calling for a change in proposed federal

ethics rules that would effectively limit a federal employee's ability to participate in the business of his or her professional society. The resolution was timed to influence the Office of Government Ethics' consideration of the proposed rules.

Still, at least some Council members have expressed concern that the AAAS resolution-making process doesn't work as well as it should. A long-time participant in Council affairs says that Council members "are not well informed about the kinds of issues that are brought

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before them in the form of resolutions. They're dependent for information on the resolution sponsors themselves; it's rare that there is any independent fact checking" of statements.

At the same time, others say that AAAS resolutions have often set an influential standard for the rest of the scientific community. For example, resolutions have required AAAS to hold its annual meeting in locations free from racial segregation (1956), and in states that have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment (1978). Such resolutions, says one Council member, "put some economic power behind the policy statements."

The fact that only one resolution has been put forth for consideration by the CCA at its December meeting is probably less a sign of member disinterest in scientific policy issues, says

Seiler, and more a reflection of a recent change in the way the CCA conducts its business.

Resolutions can be brought before the CCA either during the committee's fall gathering or at an open hearing held previous to the full Council session at the annual meeting. Sponsors of new resolutions can make their pitch at this time. (Appeals for those resolutions rejected earlier by the CCA may also be made at the open hearing.) The CCA then meets in a closed session to determine which resolutions the Council will actually vote on.

Last year for the first time, the CCA held its open meeting *after* the various AAAS disciplinary sections had conducted their business meetings. "This gave their members a chance to firm up support" of any resolution language, says Seiler.

"It may be that this year, the sections are holding off on submitting resolutions until they've had a chance to get together with their members at the annual meeting," says Seiler.

Council-watchers seem to agree that proposed resolutions have the best chance of gaining passage if their "whereas" statements are clearly focused and rooted in fact, and if the resolution itself articulates a position that AAAS members have already had a chance to thoroughly discuss via meeting symposia or *Science* articles and letters. The "be it resolved" language should also make it clear exactly what action AAAS will take, and avoid calling for action by other organizations or the government.

For more information about proposing AAAS resolutions, contact Gretchen Seiler in the AAAS Executive Office, 202-326-6633. ♦

In Brief:

■ **1992 AAAS Membership Rates and Categories.** There are two new membership categories for 1992: Patron (\$200) and K-12 teachers (\$62). Teachers can choose to receive the standard membership benefit of a year's subscription to *Science* (51 issues), or opt for a year's worth of *Science Books & Films* (10 issues). Other categories and rates are as follows: Regular membership (\$87); Postdoctoral (\$62); Full-time student (\$47); and Spouse of member (\$35—no *Science* subscription).

Rates are good from 1 January 1992 through 30 June 1992. For more information, contact one of the AAAS Customer Service representatives at 202-326-6417.

■ **"Reality: Chaos and Order"** is the title of the current AAAS Art of Science and Technology exhibit. Sculptor Mel Fisher draws on his graduate training as a scientist in his effort to reflect in wood the scientific law of conservation of energy. Visitors to AAAS head-

quarters in Washington, D.C., may see Fisher's tightly crafted, geometric work through 3 January 1992. For more information about the art and science program, contact Virginia Stern, AAAS Art of Science and Technology, 202-326-6672.

■ **The latest thinking on fraud and misconduct in science** was discussed and debated at a 15-16 November AAAS conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "Misconduct in Science—Recurring Issues, Fresh Perspectives" featured the views of scientists, lawyers, university administrators, and government officials such as UCLA vice chancellor of research Albert A. Barber; Susan Gottesman, chair of the American Society of Microbiology's committee on ethical practices; S. Andrew Schaffer, vice president and general counsel at New York University; and Samuel Thier, president of Brandeis University. Representatives of the U.S. Public Health Service's Office of Scientific Integrity Review and the National Institutes of Health's Office of Scientific

Science and Security

James Schlesinger, Senator Albert Gore, Jr., and Rozanne Ridgway are just a few of the scheduled speakers at the sixth annual AAAS Colloquium on Science and Security in Washington, D.C., 21-22 November.

The colloquium gathers many of the top U.S. and international security analysts for a two-day briefing on the latest developments in the changing world security scene.

"Security in the modern world means more than just the military," says Thomas Wander, director of AAAS's Program on Science and International Security, which organizes the conference. "There are also natural resource and economic dimensions to security issues. The colloquium will try to make sense of recent changes in these areas."

Besides former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Ridgway, president of the Atlantic Council, speakers include Brigadier General Robert A. Lindhard of the U.S. Strategic Air Command; Yashushi Akashi, the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs; and Sidney Drell, deputy director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center.

For more information, contact Wander at AAAS Directorate for International Programs, 202-326-6496. ♦

Integrity also spoke.

An executive summary of the conference will be available after 1 January 1992. For more information, contact Mark Frankel, Directorate for Science and Policy Programs, 202-326-6600.

■ **OSTP official speaks to PSEG members.** Alicia K. Dustiera, senior policy analyst for life sciences at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), spoke to about 30 members of the AAAS-sponsored Professional Society Ethics Group (PSEG), gathered at AAAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. on 13 November.

Dustiera reviewed OSTP activities with regard to such issues as the Office of Government Ethics' recent proposed rules limiting the amount of time federally employed members of professional societies could spend on society business.

PSEG is an interdisciplinary group organized by AAAS's Professional Ethics program. For more information, contact Mark Frankel, Directorate for Science and Policy, 202-326-6600. ♦

1992-93 AAAS Fellowships

Following is a list of AAAS Fellowships for scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. Contact the Directorate for Science and Policy Programs, 202-326-6600, for more information:

■ **Congressional Fellows Program.** One year as special legislative assistant in Congress. Application deadline: 15 January 1992.

■ **Diplomacy Fellows Program.** One year with either U.S. State Department or U.S. Agency for International Development. Deadline: 15 January 1992.

■ **Environmental Fellows Program.** Ten weeks with the Office of Research and Development of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Deadline: 15 February 1992.

■ **Executive Branch Fellows Program.** One or two years with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Deadline: 15 January 1992.

■ **Mass Media Fellows Program.** Ten weeks with a mass media outlet (radio, TV, newspaper, magazine). Deadline: 15 January 1992.

■ **Overseas Diplomacy Fellowship Program.** One year with a U.S. Agency for International Development mission abroad. Deadline: 15 January 1992. ♦