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PROXMIRE AND NSF: A SKEPTICAL SENATOR AND A DETERMINED DIRECTOR

As noted in the last issue of Update, Sen. William Proxmire (D-WI), the new Chairman of the HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, opened the appearance of the National Science Foundation hierarchy before the Subcommittee with words that portend a difficult road for NSF in the Senate. The Chairman made it clear that, in this era of \$200 billion annual increases in the federal deficit, any agency requesting a budget increase of 17% and a doubling of resources by 1992 was going to suffer his slings and arrows.

The Senator's line of questions for NSF Director Erich Bloch and his colleagues indicated Proxmire's belief that a lot of what NSF does is wasteful, should have low priority, and is done better by other agencies. Early in the year the Senator asked NSF for the title of every grant it awarded in FY 1986. After scrutiny by staff, NSF was asked to provide more description for those grants whose titles were found questionable. These then served as the basis for a program-by-program interrogation of NSF by the Chairman. The Senator from Wisconsin also pursued the question of how Congress measures the results of NSF-funded research.

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The Consortium represents more than 185,000 American scientists across the full range of the social and behavioral sciences, functioning as a bridge between the research world and the Washington community.

Victor G. Rosenblum, *President*

David Jenness, *Executive Director*

The Chairman also wondered whether NSF was becoming "a soft touch" for those researchers who could not get their projects funded elsewhere. Bloch noted that only 30% of proposals are supported and that in 13,000 grants there may be "a few bad apples." The important thing, he said, was not to examine individual grant titles, but to "look at content, how do they fit in with the totality of science and engineering."

Among the challenges directed at NSF by Proxmire was the notion of shutting down the psychobiology program and letting the National Institutes of Health conduct all that kind of research. Dr. David Kingsbury, Assistant Director for Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences, tried to explain the different focus of NSF-funded research from the research done by NIH. Proxmire stressed the importance of NIH and NSF cooperation in a proposal database to eliminate overlap and duplication.

Three individual grants in the anthropology program came under scrutiny: a study of non-marriage in rural Irish families, a study of bullfighting in Spain (a \$10,000 dissertation grant), and a study of Indonesian sailors' use of astronomy for navigational purposes. Kingsbury responded to criticism of the last study by noting that it was "cheaper than another NOAA (National Oceanographic and Aviation Administration) satellite."

Proxmire admitted that "a lot of what you are supporting in the economics program was useful," especially in international economics and trade. Nevertheless, he did question a grant for a study examining the 19th-century industrial revolution in England. He also questioned the funding of a Supreme Court decision-making data base, saying the Harvard Law Review does an issue every year on this topic.

During the two days of questions, Bloch and his NSF colleagues stuck to their story, repeated throughout the hearing season, of the importance of NSF-funded research to economic competitiveness and the future of this country. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM), Ranking Republican member of the Budget Committee, understood this message and issued a strong statement of support for NSF's request, noting his disagreement with the Chairman of the appropriations subcommittee.

HSST AND NEW CHAIRMAN REVIEW NSF BUDGET

On March 24, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee (HSST) with its new Chairman, Rep. Robert Roe (D-NJ), held a hearing with NSF Director Erich Bloch as the sole witness. The hearing gave the new Chairman a chance to focus his attention on the increased budget for FY 1988 at NSF and the commitment to double the Foundation's budget by FY 1992.

Noting that NSF was at the "cutting edge of what direction this country takes," Roe strongly supported the proposed

increases. He argued against across-the-board cuts embodied in the philosophy of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law, calling them "sheer lunacy." Clearly agreeing with Bloch's justification of the NSF increase based on economic competitiveness, Roe further asserted that support for basic research was the "very fundamental foundation of the future economic dynamics of this country."

Despite all these nice words, Roe also clearly demonstrated his desire to increase funding for the pre-college education and college instrumentation programs in the Foundation's budget. Assuring Bloch that he was playing devil's advocate, Roe asked how NSF would handle a significant reduction in its requested FY 1988 budget. (Although Roe was asking it as devil's advocate, the question is real enough given the stance taken by the appropriations committees during hearings; see story in this Update and previous story in March 13, 1987 issue.) Bloch responded by calling the requested budget well-balanced, but suggested he would "preserve the priorities" under which education and human resources areas -- precollege education, undergraduate programs, graduate fellowships, and teaching materials development -- would be protected first. In addition, the increased emphasis on creating science and technology centers would be delayed and certain sacrifices would be made in the disciplinary programs, probably the postponement of plans to increase the size of grants.

As in previous appearances before Congressional committees in which Bloch defended his budget, Members were concerned with the Foundation's increased emphasis on centers at the expense of individual investigators, the impact on 'small science' of administration support for the Superconducting Super Collider, and NSF's decision to limit support for supercomputer centers.

LEGISLATION URGED ON FREE TRADE IN IDEAS

In 1952 the McCarran-Walter Act was adopted over the veto of President Truman. Two sections of that Act have been used to exclude foreign speakers and scholars from the United States by denying visas to any foreigner who believes in communism or anarchism, writes about those doctrines, or belongs to an organization that promotes those doctrines. In addition, foreigners can be barred from the United States "solely, principally, or incidentally to engage in activities which would be prejudicial to the public interest, or endanger the welfare, safety, or security of the United States." Under these sections speakers and scholars seeking to enter the United States to engage in activities the government considers inconsistent with American foreign policy interests have also been barred. Now Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has introduced legislation (H.R. 1119) which would amend the McCarran-Walter Act by revising the grounds under which aliens may be excluded.

Scholarly organizations have joined together with civil liberties groups to support a Coalition for Free Trade in Ideas to support the legislation introduced by Frank. The basic intent of the bill is to insure that the government may not exclude (or deport) people solely on the basis of ideology. It would take the government out of the business of selecting which opinions are suitable for the American audience. Scholarly groups are concerned that scholars scheduled to appear at conferences of international associations held in the United States could be denied visas to attend such meetings because of their political beliefs. Notorious examples of excluded foreigners include writers Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Dario Fo, and political activists such as former NATO official General Nino Pasti and Mrs. Salvador Allende.

The Frank bill has over 50 co-sponsors. Hearings are expected sometime this summer in the Immigration Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee. On the Senate side, the retirement of Sen. Charles Mathias (R-MD) has slowed things down. Last year Mathias and Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) introduced a Free Trade in Ideas legislative package on which hearings were held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Sen. Simon or Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) is expected to take the lead this year, but neither has done so yet.

In a related issue, other scholars are concerned with the freedom to travel and the facilitation of the flow of information around the world. Legislation dealing with these problems was recently introduced by Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) and Rep. John Miller (R-WA). Congress has amended the Passport Act to ensure that the executive branch limits the use of passports only for the risk of imminent danger to the safety of American travellers (e.g. the administration's recent pronouncement about Americans going to Lebanon). Yet the executive branch continues to prohibit travel of Americans under its economic embargo authority. The Berman-Miller bill seeks to limit that authority. In addition, it would remove the use of economic embargoes as a tool to restrict the export or import of informational materials. Parts of the Berman-Miller bill were accepted on March 24 by the House Foreign Affairs Committee during its markup of the Omnibus Trade bill.

Both the Frank and the Berman-Miller bills do not represent easy issues for legislators to support. There are too many political minefields -- Nicaragua, Cuba, the PLO, IRA -- for men and women who are normally cautious in dealing with civil liberties issues. Yet as Senator Mathias noted in dealing with the visa denial cases: "Today's telecommunications media can bring into our living rooms the images and voices of exponents of every political and artistic tendency around the globe. To deny these speakers physical entry onto our shores insults the intelligence of the American people, as well as injuring our freedom." The same may be said of travel and importation of information.

NIH DIRECTORS CORDIALLY RECEIVED BY HOUSE COMMITTEE

Shortly after this year's attempt by the administration to control 'budget-busting' research funding at the National Institutes of Health was blocked (see Update, March 13, 1987), the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies began hearings on the programs, plans, and accomplishments of individual NIH agencies. The hearings are chaired by Rep. William Natcher (D-KY), who takes pride in his Subcommittee's treatment of the Institutes, and who will certainly be one of the most honored figures in the NIH centennial now being celebrated in Washington and around the country.

On March 9, Duane F. Alexander, Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, summarized 25 years of work at his agency, pointing particularly to great accomplishments in lowering infant mortality, preventing birth defects, countering infertility, and lessening the rates of teenage pregnancy and learning disabilities. Alexander reported promising new techniques against Respiratory Distress Syndrome in infants, and accomplishments in basic research on neurohormonal aspects of growth, for which a longtime grantee of NICHD, Stanley Cohen, was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1986.

Alexander commented at some length on a report issued by the National Academy of Sciences earlier this year, entitled Risking the Future: Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing. It paid particular attention to social and behavioral science in preventing unwanted pregnancy and dealing with teenage sexuality. The report reflected much research conducted under NICHD auspices, and would, according to Alexander, set the stage for further research by that Institute. Additionally, Alexander gave emphasis in his testimony to ongoing research on dyslexia and other learning disabilities and to an increased attention to research on childhood injuries, the major cause of death in children after the first year of life.

NICHD is also active, as are other NIH agencies, in basic research on AIDS, particularly with regard to the development of spermicides for contraceptive purposes and to the maternal-fetal transmission of the virus. He reported that in New York City, 0.6% of all live births now show AIDS infection.

As is customary in such settings, Subcommittee members asked Dr. Alexander whether there were things his Institute could not do under the proposed FY 1988 administration budget. As usual, Alexander replied that it was a good budget...but more would be welcome. He pointed out that under the proposed budget no new clinical trials would be funded, and said that there were important ones waiting. He also said that low birth-weight, especially among Blacks, was scientifically poised for greater research attention.

On March 16, T. Franklin Williams, Director of the National Institute on Aging, appeared before the same Subcommittee and was equally well treated. For several years, Alzheimer disease has been a major NIA emphasis; Williams reported that a new program of Alzheimer Disease Patient Registries, a national data network now being created, would yield much information on the prevalence, onset, risk, and etiology of the disease, as well as a necessary base for designing health care policies.

Williams reported a broadening of focus in research on hip fracture from its relationship to osteoporosis to the inclusion of more behavioral aspects, such as studies of walking, balance, and falls. Similarly, he stressed the importance of nutritional studies for the wellbeing of the aged, and for research on oral hygiene and health, hearing and its relation to comprehension and memory, and behavioral control of urinary incontinence. Going yet more deeply into the social and behavioral milieu, Williams said, "Scientists are discovering that by shaping the individual's environment -- his or her work, community, health care setting -- older people can exercise greater control over their lives."

As in several earlier appearances, Williams spoke of the great need to increase the number of geriatric and gerontological scientists in professional and post-professional training programs. Questioned by Members, Williams reported that increased support of such training by NIA would not be possible under the proposed FY 1988 budget, and that there would have to be about a 16% downward negotiation, on the average, of funds for research project grants. Comments by Subcommittee members in connection with Alexander's and Williams' testimony made it clear that this appropriations committee had no intention of recommending funding at the proposed level.

PEACE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES FIRST GROUP OF FELLOWS

The United States Institute of Peace has announced the first group of scholars and leaders to become Fellows in the Jennings Randolph Program for International Peace. The group includes former ambassadors; professors of international law, theology, and political science; a former United Nations official; and a former Member of Congress. Five of the initial Fellows are U.S. citizens, two are from Europe, and one is from Africa.

Most of the Fellows will devote their time to research and writing books. Topics include: promoting human rights in situations of armed conflict, problems of low-intensity warfare, prospects for peace in the Sudan, aggression and self-defense, the role of the Western Alliance in promoting international peace, teaching about the U.N., U.N. peacekeeping operations, and the work of international organizations in promoting peace.

To date, the Peace Institute Grants Program has made 25 awards totaling \$750,712 with another 11 awards pending. Once the pending awards are finalized, the Institute will have made awards totaling approximately \$1,034,000 since the program began in July, 1986. The Institute is located at 730 Jackson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20503; 202/789-5700.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information. A comprehensive list of federal funding sources is included in COSSA's Guide to Federal Funding for Social Scientists.

Programs for Elementary School Science Instruction
(Directorate for Science and Engineering Education)

The Division of Materials Development, Research, and Informal Science Education in NSF's Science and Engineering Education Directorate is currently seeking proposals for creating improved programs and materials for science instruction for elementary school students. Proposals are sought for projects that will improve the content, increase the role of the child as an active agent in the learning process, and lead to an increase in the time allotted to science instructions in elementary schools. It is expected that projects will devote special attention to frequent hands-on experiences. Proposals should reflect relevant research in teaching, learning, and the use of technology.

In addition to occasional targeted solicitations, the Division funds proposals in four broad topic areas: 1) expanding the understanding of factors that promote effective teaching and learning of math, science, and technology; 2) encouraging informal learning through mass media programs that can reach large portions of the population; 3) stimulating the development of exemplary educational models and materials; and 4) analyzing the potential for, and exploring the use of, advanced technologies in education.

Application/Review Process: For the program for elementary school science instruction, a preliminary proposal and a response from the Instructional Materials Development Program are required before a formal proposals will be accepted. The preliminary proposals may be a comparatively brief, informal letter-of-inquiry.

Restrictions on Awards: The Division expects to make 3 or 4 awards with a duration of 3-4 years each. The total funding for these projects will be approximately \$6 million.

Deadline: Preliminary proposals should be submitted by June 1; formal proposals by August 3, 1987.

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