

# CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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TO: COSSA Members, Affiliates, Contributors, and Friends

FROM: Roberta Balstad Miller, Executive Director

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COSSA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

May 7, 1982

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This Week...

National Science Foundation  
OMB Dissolves the Statistical Policy Branch  
Public Health Service Reauthorization  
National Institute of Mental Health  
National Institute of Education  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
New OMB Policy

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## National Science Foundation

A final date has not been set for the House floor debate and vote on the National Science Foundation authorization. It is still tentatively scheduled for the week of May 10, but if it does not take place then, it will certainly take place the week of May 17. This is the time both to send a mailgram and to phone your Congressman asking that he or she support the Science and Technology Committee authorization for NSF (H.R. 5748) without amendment. If your Congressman has been supportive on this issue, ask if he or she is willing to make a statement supporting the Committee bill during the floor debate. COSSA would be happy to provide background materials for use in preparing such a statement. Please call the COSSA office if you wish to have materials sent to your Congressman or if you wish to have the COSSA staff visit your Congressman's office.

## OMB Dissolves Statistical Policy Branch

On April 23, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced that it would dissolve its Statistical Policy Branch as of Friday, April 30. Most of the statistical policy staff

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OMB Dissolves Statistical Policy Branch (continued)

will be reassigned to information and regulatory management responsibilities in OMB. Over the past several decades, federal support for statistical planning and coordination has been gradually declining. However OMB's recent action, according to Katherine K. Wallman, Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS), "marks the end of statistical policy as an identifiable function within the United States government. For the first time in more than fifty years, no individual will serve as chief statistician for the United States." (See attachment 1)

Public Health Service Reauthorization

COSSA submitted testimony to the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment on the Public Health Service reauthorization bill (H.R. 5919) this week. The testimony called for changes in the legislation to provide that at least seven representatives from the fields of public policy, law, health policy, economics, management, sociology, anthropology, statistics, psychology, and linguistics be appointed to the Advisory Board of the National Institutes of Health and that an equivalent number of social and behavioral scientists be appointed to the advisory boards of each of the National Institutes and the advisory boards of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration and its member institutes. COSSA also urges that the legislation encourage and support agency research in the social and behavioral as well as the biological, medical, and other health-related sciences. COSSA endorsed the provision in the legislation that places the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the National Center for Health Services Research (NCHSR) within the National Institutes of Health.

The Subcommittee held a mark up for the legislation on Thursday, May 6, and decided against changing the requirements for representation on the NIH and ADAMHA advisory boards. The National Center for Health Services Research was placed within the National Institutes of Health, but the National Center for Health Statistics will not be moved to NIH. It will remain administratively within the Office of the Secretary.

National Institute of Mental Health

COSSA presented testimony on the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education on Wednesday, May, 5. The testimony stressed the inequity of the relevance criteria used in prescreening proposals for extra-mural research in the social and behavioral sciences. Although all proposals submitted to NIMH must, according to NIMH, "state the mental health problems to which the proposal pertains," only proposals in the social and behavioral sciences must in addition show that the research is "clearly relevant to mental illness and health" or be "explicitly focused on mental health." This more stringent relevance requirement for social and behavioral science research discourages the submission and funding of proposals in this area. COSSA has prepared draft report language for the Subcommittee to consider that urges that the relevance requirements at NIMH be the same for proposals in all disciplines.

National Institute of Education

See attachment 2.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies held hearings for outside witnesses on the National Endowment for the Humanities on Friday, May 7. Prior to the hearing, COSSA sent letters to the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Sidney Yates, and to all the Subcommittee members urging that NEH funding be restored to \$148 million. The letter stressed the importance of NEH support for scholarly research in a number of COSSA disciplines. A similar letter was sent to Senator James A. McClure, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies.

The following people have been nominated for membership on the National Council on the Humanities:

Lawrence Chickering, Executive Director, Institute for  
Contemporary Studies, San Francisco, CA  
Jeffrey Hart, Professor of English, Dartmouth College  
Gertrude Himmelfarb, Distinguished Professor of History,  
Graduate School, C.U.N.Y.  
J. Clayburn LaForce, Professor of Economics and Dean,  
Graduate School of Management, U.C.L.A.  
Rita Ricardo Campbell, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution  
on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University  
Peter Stanlis, Distinguished Professor of Humanities,  
Rockford College, Rockford, IL

New OMB Policy

Administration officials, including research and statistical agency heads, have been prohibited from answering any questions in Congressional hearings about their use of possible budget increases. This new policy sharply restricts the information available to the Congress in making its budget decisions. The OMB memorandum establishing the policy is enclosed. (See attachment 3)

Late News - Senate Authorization for NSF

The Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space, under its chairman Senator Harrison Schmitt, will mark up the NSF authorization on Tuesday, May 11. (This Subcommittee is engaged in a jurisdictional dispute with the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources for responsibility for the NSF authorization, both committees are reporting authorizations for NSF.) The Chairman of the Subcommittee will recommend that \$5 million be added to the administration's recommendations for the social and behavioral science research programs in NSF and that \$5 million also be added for Science and Engineering Education. In addition, the Chairman is recommending that \$10 million be set aside for research programs jointly funded by industry and the Foundation. These programs could be in any of the sciences and engineering, including the social and behavioral sciences.

# Plan to Restructure Statistics Unit Raises New Outcry on Cuts

By Pete Earley  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A decision by the Office of Management and Budget to restructure its Statistical Policy Branch has raised new complaints that the Reagan administration is cutting federal statistical programs too deeply.

News of a reorganization of the policy unit, which oversees and coordinates government statistical studies, recently leaked out of OMB after the unit's employees reportedly were told they would be reassigned.

A few hours after that meeting, Rep. Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.), chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, sent OMB Director David A. Stockman a telegram asking why the office was being "abolished."

"OMB's action is a further step backward for intelligent and informed policy making and will only confirm those who have dark fears of a massive statistical cover-up in the making," Reuss wrote.

Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), chairman of a House Budget Committee task force studying indexing and entitlements, has also written Stockman and is circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter, protesting the "dissolution" of the office.

OMB spokesman Edwin L. Dale Jr. acknowledged that the statistical unit will be restructured as part of a larger reorganization of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Dale said no final decision has been made, but he said the unit will continue performing its statistical du-

ties. "We expect to issue a full explanation in the near future about the changes," said Dale.

The size and power of the statistical unit, which has been around since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt, has been steadily downgraded in recent years. The office, which had as many as 70 staff members some 30 years ago, now has the equivalent of 9½ full-time positions.

Privately, OMB officials said one reason the unit is being restructured is because it has been ineffective, a charge with which many statisticians agree. Even so, many statisticians say the government needs a central statistics office.

"The federal government has more than 70 statistical programs run by many different departments, explained Courtenay Slater, former chief economist at the Commerce Department. Without one coordinating unit, she said, the quality and timeliness of major economic data would be threatened.

Nobel prize winner Wassily Leontief also has called for one statistical office. He told a congressional committee that "the United States is the only advanced industrialized country that still does not possess a real, central statistical office . . ."

The reorganization also comes at a time when many statisticians say the quality of government statistics is in jeopardy.

The government's two biggest statistics collectors, the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, have been forced to slice programs

because of budget cuts. BLS has ended 19 studies, stopped all travel, and failed to replace 100 employees who quit or retired this year. The agency has asked for an emergency \$5.6 million appropriation which, it says, it needs "to maintain the accuracy" of such key economic indicators as the Consumer Price Index.

The Census Bureau has dropped a host of studies and decided not to fund a new five-year census in 1985. It has also canceled a special sample in its 1983 census of agriculture and stopped collecting farm data from Guam, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Many of the programs being trimmed helped the government monitor how its programs were being used. Others helped policy makers predict economic trends.

"A million dollars saved today through short-sighted reductions in the budgets for statistical programs could lead to erroneous decisions that would cost the private and public sectors billions of dollars over the long run," John J. Casson, chief economist for American Express, warned at a congressional subcommittee hearing in March.

Witnesses for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Children's Defense Fund told the subcommittee that cuts had deprived them vital data about minorities and the handicapped. A spokesman for the AFL-CIO accused the BLS of

making "anti-labor cuts," because, he said, the agency canceled several programs that provide information for unions to use in negotiations.

OMB said the cuts were not political. The programs with the fewest users were cut, Dale said, as part of the government's belt-tightening.

Earlier this month, the Congressional Research Service released a 53-page study that provoked even more concern among statistics watchers. The report said that budgets for statistical programs would decrease by another 5.1 percent under the proposed fiscal 1983 budget.

OMB insists the budgets for statistical programs either will hold steady or increase in fiscal 1983 and claims the flow of crucial economic data will not be impaired.

Daniel B. Levine, a former deputy director of the Census Bureau who left in January to join private industry, agreed that despite the cuts, the government's most important data is as good or better than information collected in the past.

But, Levine said, the real impact of the cuts could be felt "later down the road." Young and imaginative statisticians are leaving the government, he said, and government managers are so busy looking for programs to cut that they don't have time to improve data collection.

# Changes at Education Institute Stir Turmoil

By Charles R. Babcock  
Washington Post Staff Writer

These are days of turmoil at the usually quiet National Institute of Education, the research arm of the Department of Education that has been a New Right target because of its allegedly liberal, values-oriented research.

In the past month, NIE chief Edward Curran, the 48-year-old former headmaster at Washington's National Cathedral School, has circulated proposals to redirect research grants to study conservative themes, announced the termination of long-running contracts at 17 scattered research centers and labs, and started reassigning and firing top employes. Most recently, there were reports of a purge of the readers who review research applications.

The result has been cries of alarm from members of the tight-knit educational research community who see the actions as an attempt to politicize the 300-person agency. Some view Curran's assistants, Larry Uzell, a former aide to Sen. John P. East (R-N.C.), and Tom Asick, of the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, as the political operatives with Curran as the front man.

Paul Hill, a former NIE researcher now with the Rand Corp. in Washington, said, "They clearly are trying to change the direction of the institute from what they perceive as being liberal, pro-minority, using education as a tool of social change. They're turning away from that to a much more conservative approach."

David Florio, legislative director for the American Educational Research Association, said his group is concerned because NIE's new plans include "fairly naive" topics that already have been studied in depth. The plans also pay little attention to recent efforts to study more effective schools, the role of tests, and school finance and management, he added.

Curran said in a recent interview that the criticisms are "empty charges." He acknowledged that he is pushing NIE in a new direction. "I am aware that educational research has to be objective. But I think we have to look at some of the other sides of issues that I feel have been ignored over the past few years."

Educational research often is a murky area for the uninitiated. Members of Congress have criticized NIE for being too "ivory tower" in its approach and for not producing enough practical help for the classroom teacher and school administrator.

Conservative groups saw bigger problems. When the Heritage Foundation issued its conservative blueprint for change before Ronald Reagan's election, it said that the results of federally funded educational research were "at best spotty and inconclusive; at worst, they have been programs for indoctrinating students in ethical relativism and social determinism."

In its first-year report card on the Department of Education, it added that the department continued to fund "numerous questionable research projects." Curran is quick to put a NIE-funded feminist film called "Freestyle" in this category.

He said the purpose of the film is to strike down sex role stereotypes. "I don't question whether we should



EDWARD CURRAN  
... criticisms are "empty charges"

be concerned with sex role stereotypes," he said. "I question whether we should spend taxpayer dollars on that problem when we ought to be worrying more about how to improve student achievement."

The internal battle between the newcomers and the entrenched researchers first gained public notice in February when copies of the 1983 and 1984 planning guidelines were leaked to the trade press.

Suggested research topics included tuition tax credits, merit pay for teachers, whether free-wheeling structured or pre-professional college program graduates are "richer, happier, wiser, and/or more virtuous," and the "effects on learning of a schoolchild's mother's holding a full-time job."

Curran said that some of the early ideas were dropped in the planning process, but he defended the shift. The idea to study the impact a mother's working had on her child's academic performance, for instance, "didn't come to me as a right-wing bullet," he said. "It's a concern I've had for a number of years."

The next step came in March, when Curran wrote the head of the 17 regional research labs and centers funded by the government, telling them that he was terminating their contracts a year early.

In doing so, he noted that they now would be required to compete with other groups, rather than have a guaranteed funding level. Since NIE was established in 1973, its budget has dropped from \$136 million to \$53.4 million, with level funding proposed for fiscal 1983.

Ten years ago, the labs and centers got \$34 million, one quarter of NIE's budget. They now get \$28 million, more than half the budget.

Some lab directors were quoted as saying they didn't mind the competition, but were fearful that Curran would use the fresh money to bankroll the New Right's research agenda. The NIE director retorted that

the labs and centers seemed more interested in their own welfare. "It's new to me to see an interest group work so hard for its little piece of the pie."

The most recent step began early last month, when Curran and his deputies began reassigning NIE officials and informing 15 others their contracts wouldn't be renewed. Many of the researchers are hired on three-year contracts, outside civil service channels, and have had their contracts renewed once or twice already.

Some of those affected say privately they are considering a suit, on the grounds their bosses seem to be picking on women, who have been most affected by the cuts. Curran denied any sexist intent in the terminations. "I think it's time to bring new life, infuse new professional expertise into the institute," he said.

He also said that was the reason he has asked his special assistants to look for new grant application readers. In the past, Curran said, NIE seemed to rely on "a certain part of its constituency" in picking peer review groups. "If there's been an absence of the conservative view, we'll try to make sure there is a presence of a conservative view."



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

attachment #3

March 29, 1982

CIRCULAR NO. A-10  
Revised  
Transmittal Memorandum No. 1

TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS

SUBJECT: Responsibilities for disclosure with respect to the budget

This transmittal memorandum amends paragraph 4.d of OMB Circular No. A-10, Revised, dated November 12, 1976. Paragraph 4.d is changed to read:

4.d. In responding to specific questions on program and appropriation requests, witnesses will refrain from providing plans for the use of appropriations that exceed the President's request. Witnesses, typically, bear responsibility for the conduct of one or a few programs, whereas the President must weigh carefully all of the needs of the Federal Government, and compare them against each other and against the revenues available to meet such needs. Where appropriate, witnesses should call attention to this difference in scope of responsibility in explaining why it is not proper for them to support efforts to raise appropriations above the amounts requested by the President.

This change is effective immediately.

David A. Stockman  
Director