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MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG: CONGRESS SOMETIMES ACTS; PRESIDENT SOMETIMES VETOES

Congress remains embroiled in maneuvers on the continuing resolution to maintain government spending, the debt ceiling increase to maintain government borrowing, and the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction amendment to cut government spending. A continuing resolution that will fund government programs through December 12, passed the House on November 12 and the Senate the following day. Congress also passed a short-term debt ceiling increase of $80 billion that should allow the government to keep borrowing money until December 13. The month grace period saves the President from embarrassment as he goes off to the Geneva summit. Gramm-Rudman-Hollings remains stalled in conference. Meanwhile Congress and the President continue to take action on various other pieces of legislation of interest to the social and behavioral science research community.

NSF Appropriations

The conference committee has reported the 1986 appropriations bill for the National Science Foundation (NSF), and on November 13 the House passed the conference report. In a normal
year, the Senate would now clear the conference report and then the bill would be signed by the President and the Foundation could plan its allocation of funds. This year, however, there are some more hoops to jump through. It appears the normal process will not operate in time to keep this appropriation out of the Continuing Resolution that will fund government programs from November 15 to December 12. Furthermore, the impact of any deficit reduction package may need to be factored into the allocation equation.

The conference committee gave NSF a total of $1.524 billion for FY 1986. This is a $22 million increase over FY 1985, but $45 million below the FY 1986 request. For Research and Related Activities, the committee appropriated $1.3525 billion, an increase of $45 million over FY 1985, and $45 million below the FY 1986 request. For Science and Engineering Education, the committee appropriated $55.5 million, which along with the $31.5 million carried over from last year, equals a total of $87 million for these programs in FY 1986.

The Committee also added language in its report that advanced scientific computing, ocean drilling, and research programs that enhance minority and women's participation be funded at the FY 1986 request levels. The committee report continues: "In addition, $5 million has been included above the amount provided by the House for other activities selected at the agency's discretion, provided that such activities be submitted for approval of the Committees on Appropriations." The insertion of this language would allow the appropriations committees to veto program initiatives. This could affect the Ethics and Values in Science and Technology (EVIST) program. In a letter to NSF Director Erich Bloch, House Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Edward Boland (D-MA) made clear he did not want the Foundation to spend money on this program in FY 1986. This places Bloch and NSF in the position of having the authorization committees requiring support for EVIST research and the appropriations committees telling them not to support such research. All this occurred after Bloch had committed himself to maintaining support for EVIST (see Update, October 18, 1985).

Meanwhile, the conference report on the NSF authorization bill, the first in five years, has cleared the the Congress and awaits the President's signature.

Soviet/East European Research

In 1983 Congress enacted the Soviet and Eastern European Research and Training Program to support research and training for a new generation of Soviet and East European scholars. Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL), one of the sponsors of the original legislation, noted that "the number of academic and policy experts in this area has always been small, and many think that it will shrink further if the necessary funds are not available ... to maintain and improve professional expertise on the Soviet system." The program was authorized for ten years.
Last year the program awarded grants to 10 research organizations which in turn supported 624 scholars. This year the House supported continued funding at $4.8 million. Yet the Senate Subcommittee which handles the State Department appropriation eliminated funding for the program in its attempt to meet the guidelines of the budget resolution. However, after lobbying by COSSA and other education and research groups, and the support of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN), the full Senate restored the $4.8 million.

NIH Reauthorization Vetoed: House Overrides

As feared, on November 8, President Reagan vetoed the Health Research Extension Act of 1985 which reauthorized programs at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (see Update November 1, 1985). The President cited the cost of the bill, an unnecessary new institute, and congressional micromanagement of NIH as reasons for the veto. This is the second year in a row that the President has vetoed this legislation. On November 12 the House voted 380-32 to override the veto. The Senate, 77 of whose members signed a letter to the President urging him not to veto the bill, is expected to vote to override as well.

Curran Vote Postponed Again

For the third time the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee postponed the vote on the nomination of Edward Curran to be the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This saga is now in its eighth month. Rumors about Curran's nomination surfaced in early March. He was nominated by the President on April 4. A hearing, at which Curran was sharply questioned by Senators and opposed by members of the humanities community, was finally held on October 2. The Committee was supposed to vote on October 23, 30, and November 7. As of the moment, the vote is now re-scheduled for November 19. The White House continues to lobby hard for Curran's confirmation. Others continue to lobby hard against confirmation. Stay tuned!

DEFICIT REDUCTION IMPACT ON RESEARCH

The deficit reduction package which bears the names of its three Senate sponsors, Phil Gramm (R-TX), Warren Rudman (R-NH) and Ernest Hollings (D-SC), is currently stalled in a House-Senate conference committee which has now grown to 63 members. The impact of this legislation on research funding is making managers of research agencies and their supporters extremely nervous.

Gramm-Rudman-Hollings (GRH) sets budget deficit targets that must be reached each fiscal year until the budget is balanced (by 1990 in the House version, by 1991 in the Senate version). If these targets are not met, mechanisms are triggered that give the
President the power to decide where to cut in order to reduce the budget and meet those targets. However, the paring knife does not cut everything in the federal budget. Certain programs would be exempt from cuts: social security, interest payments on the debt, and some already-signed contracts in the Senate and House versions; veterans' pensions, eight programs for the poor, and all signed contracts including those in effect for student loans, in the House version only. Some other programs are deemed 'uncontrollable'; civil and military pensions, and others with annual cost-of-living increases, would lose their increases, but no basic benefits would be cut. The House included Medicare, Medicaid, and other health programs for the poor and elderly in this category, the Senate did not. The rest of the government's programs, including research, are considered 'controllable' and subject to cuts.

No matter which version emerges from the conference it is clear that this plan to reduce the deficit and balance the budget would hit research programs hard. This results from the decrease each year in the part of the budget that is 'controllable.' By bearing the major brunt of the reductions necessary to meet the targets, these programs will require large percentage cuts. Willis Shapley, in an analysis for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), suggests that a reduction of 30% or more may be necessary over the five year period. The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding claims that the NIH budget would be reduced by $400 million annually in FY 1987 and 1988 and by even larger amounts in FY 1989 and 1990. However, it is somewhat unclear what the impact of the 'contract' provision is going to have. If student loans are protected, why not research contracts and grants? On the other hand, the administration has been claiming on the basis of earlier agreements on future levels of defense appropriations, that it will not have to cut defense as much as the congressional sponsors of GRH are hoping. If this is true and the President can wiggle out of the defense cut requirements -- in the interest of national security -- then the other 'controllables' will be cut more.

In addition, Science magazine (November 1, 1985) notes that if GRH is enacted the National Science Foundation (NSF) "favors allowing OMB to decide where to chop research programs, instead of having a uniform reduction imposed across all research efforts." NSF Director Erich Bloch has made clear that in the era of GRH, tough decisions about overall research and development programs will need to be made. This administration's science policy advocates, such as White House Science Adviser George Keyworth III, have made clear that they are inclined to support basic research over applied research and development. Given such an attitude, Bloch thinks OMB would look favorably on NSF.

The actual fate of GRH is tied up in an ever-increasing tangle of political knots. There is now word from the White House that the President might veto the legislation because of its defense budget cut requirements. Some members of Congress feel GRH's drastic remedy may be the only way to move the
President out of his block of concrete on tax increases. Others believe that this measure will indeed get the government out of areas it should not be in. There are also constitutional questions, concerning legislative grants of power to the executive, or using legislative agencies like the Congressional Budget Office to perform executive functions, that muddy the waters even more. Yet overriding all this is the political attractiveness of 'doing something about the deficit' -- America's number one problem. So for those concerned about support for basic research, some version of GRH may be a bitter pill to swallow.

NEW FRENCH INSTITUTE TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Educational research will be upgraded in France, according to a story in the November 10 issue of the (London) Times Higher Education Supplement, by the creation of a National Institute for Research in Education and Training (INREF). The plans have been announced by the minister for national education, Jean-Pierre Chevènement. INREF will sponsor and coordinate research in universities, other public institutions, and industry, and will create a network of regional offices to handle coordination and the dissemination of research results.

The Institute will (apparently) fund and administer medium and longterm research programs with objectives specified by the ministry -- i.e., 'applied' research aimed at altering procedures, developing materials, etc. It will also fund, on a competitive basis, fundamental research within the framework of traditional social science disciplines; research devoted to the teaching of specific subjects (e.g., mathematics, foreign languages); and research on new educational technologies.

In November 1983, M. Chevènement, then minister for science and industry, visited the Consortium and other organizations in Washington. In his earlier post, he is generally credited with increasing social science funding in France in the early 1980's at a rate equivalent to increases in support for natural science. Now, with the creation of INREF, educational research will be at the same administrative level as research in science, medicine, and agriculture.

NRC PANEL CALLS FOR CHANGES IN CENSUS METHODOLOGY FOR 1990

A National Research Council panel reviewing special techniques used by the Census Bureau to improve the population count in the 1980 census has concluded that several of the methods were not cost-effective, and should probably be replaced during the 1990 census with greater efforts to develop statistical adjustment procedures (i.e., formulas developed to revise raw population counts to account for known sources of error, based on data from independent sources such as birth and death records and special surveys). The Panel on the Decennial
Census Methodology was asked by the Census Bureau to review current plans for the 1990 census and to recommend any cost-effective changes that would help improve the accuracy of the count. The panel recommended "the Census Bureau carry out a vigorous program of research on coverage evaluation and adjustment methods that, if successful, would permit adjustment of census figures as part of the methodology for the 1990 census." It also stressed that adjustment procedures should serve "as a complement to -- not a substitute for --" continued efforts to find cost-effective ways for improving census counting techniques.

The panel is a component of the Committee on National Statistics of the Commission on Behavioral and Social Science and Education. The Bicentennial Census: New Directions for Methodology in 1990, the panel's report, was recently published by the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20418.

NEW POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN AEROSPACE HISTORY

The American Historical Association (AHA) recently announced a competition for a postdoctoral fellowship which will allow a successful applicant to spend one year as part of the History Office of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in pursuit of a proposed research project. The new program, supported initially by NASA for a five year period beginning in 1986, provides an opportunity to engage in significant and sustained advanced research in NASA aerospace science, technology, management, or policy. The program is intended to: 1) increase historical understanding of NASA-related history of science, engineering, management, and public policy among college and university faculty; and 2) provide NASA with an improved base of qualified historians to research and write NASA history monographs.

Applicants must be U.S. citizens and have a PhD in history or in a closely related field. Specific and detailed proposals to conduct research in a NASA-related field are a requirement in the application process. A fellow is expected to spend his/her twelve-month appointment in residence at NASA headquarters and/or various NASA centers working exclusively on the research program. The stipend is $23,000 with provision for a small allowance for relocation and travel expenses.

Applications, which are due February 1, 1986, will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of members appointed by AHA, the Society for the History of Technology, the History of Science Society, and the Economic History Association. Application forms and additional information can be obtained from: Fellowship in Aerospace History, AHA, 400 A Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003.
Sources of Research Support: Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Family Planning

The Office of Family Planning (OFP), located in the Office of Population Affairs, administers the federal Title X of the Public Health Service Act. A portion of the OFP budget is retained to support applied research on the improvement of family planning services delivery for low-income women and others in need of such services. OFP first issued solicitations for competitive, peer-reviewed research proposals in FY 1983, and moved to a more routinized system in FY 1986. Preference is given to proposals in the priority areas announced by the agency.

The FY 1986 research announcement contains 10 priority areas: family planning client behavior; adolescent family planning clients; male family planning clients; targeting of family planning services to subgroups with special needs (i.e., low-income families, minorities, handicapped, etc.); clinic personnel behavior; organization and management of family planning services; the role of private physicians; natural family planning; infertility services; and counseling services (evaluation of role and effectiveness).

Researchers should be aware that since the new program announcement was just released in November, February 1 will, in effect, be the first deadline for new proposals for FY 1986 funding. OFP staff, therefore, are encouraging researchers to submit proposals for this round of competition.

FY 1986 Budget: Approximately $1 million is available for new awards.

Funding Mechanisms: Researchers may apply for individual research project grants and New Investigator Research Awards (NIRA). Direct costs for investigator-initiated research grants should not exceed $100,000; NIRA awards are limited to $37,500. Awards can be made for a maximum of 3 years.

Review Process: Grant applications are submitted to the Division of Research Grants at the National Institutes of Health. After scientific review by DRG study sections, final funding decisions are made by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs with assistance from staff.

Disciplines Supported: The OFP encourages proposals from a variety of social and behavioral science disciplines. To date, most support has gone to sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, and epidemiologists.

Deadlines: February 1, June 1, and October 1

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