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This Week . . .

Senate Passes NSF Authorization Bill: Appropriations Stalled
SPECIAL REPORT: House Task Force Holds Social Science Hearings

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SENATE PASSES NSF AUTHORIZATION BILL: APPROPRIATIONS STALLED

On September 26, for the first time in five years, the Senate passed an authorization bill for the National Science Foundation (NSF). The House passed its authorization bill on April 17. The authorization grants the authority and sets levels for the various directorates and programs of the agency to spend money. The appropriations bill determines the actual number of dollars the agency receives. Although NSF has been appropriated money without an authorization bill during the past 5 years, passage of an authorization allows Congress and the Foundation to alter some of its priorities and non-spending activities.

The FY 1986 authorization bill passed by the Senate allocates \$262.0 million for the Biological, Behavioral and Social Science (BBS) Directorate. This is about \$3 million more than the House authorization and \$10 million above the FY 85 current plan level. For the Foundation as a whole the authorization is \$1.501 billion, slightly below FY 1985 current levels. In addition, \$50.5 million of new spending is authorized for Science and Engineering Education. The Ethics and Values in Science and Technology (EVIST) program is authorized to spend not less than \$1 million. Since the separate program that now exists at the NSF has been abolished, the Senate has asked the Foundation to report back on how this money will be spent in FY 1986. In non-fiscal matters, the addition of "engineering" to all the places in the NSF organic act where "science" is mentioned is accomplished. The Senate did not, however, agree with the House that Assistant Directors should no longer be Presidential appointees subject to Senate confirmation. In almost all other aspects, the two bills are remarkably

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similar, and relevant committee staff suggested there may not be a need for a formal conference committee to iron out the differences, although it is still unclear when final passage will occur.

The Senate's passage of the authorization bill occurred because of the settlement of the dispute between the Labor and Human Resources Committee (LHR), chaired by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and the Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space (STS), of the Commerce Committee, chaired by Sen. Slade Gorton (R-WA), both of whom claimed jurisdiction over NSF. The agreement reached allows LHR to keep primary jurisdiction over all aspects of NSF's authorization. However, the full Commerce committee will have sequential jurisdiction over the bill after it is reported out of the LHR committee and that any amendments from Commerce will be considered first when the bill reaches the Senate floor. The Commerce committee will also be allowed to appoint two conferees to any conference committee. This sequential jurisdiction extends to the Foundation's research and related activities, but not to the Science and Engineering Education programs. Also, this agreement extends only to the end of this Congress in 1986.

At this writing, the appropriations bill for NSF remains stalled. It appears to be embroiled in the efforts of Senators to cut spending. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM) Chairman of the Senate Budget committee, has asked the Appropriations committee to re-examine all appropriations bills already passed by the committee. The Budget committee claims the HUD-Independent Agencies bill, of which NSF is a part, passed by the appropriations committee last July (see Update August 9, 1985), exceeds the Budget resolution by a considerable amount. It is likely that the reexamination will lead to a decrease in the funds available to NSF in FY 1986. The hope is that in the next week the NSF appropriations bill will pass the Senate. It appears a conference with the House will be necessary. There has also been movement on the huge Labor/HHS/ED appropriations bill. Full details will appear in the next issue.

SPECIAL REPORT : HOUSE TASK FORCE HOLDS SOCIAL SCIENCE HEARINGS

On September 17, 18, and 19 the House Science and Technology Committee's Task Force on U.S. Science Policy held public hearings on the "Role of the Social and Behavioral Sciences." The purpose of the hearings, as noted by Committee Chairman Don Fuqua (D-FL), was to provide "a general overview of the social and behavioral sciences and an identification of the fields of active research." In addition, the Task Force would focus on "the utilization of the social and behavioral sciences in government and industry," and discuss "current controversies surrounding federal funding," as well as assess "the federal role in facilitating the use of the social and behavioral sciences in national policymaking." Further, "Since the last congressional review of federal science policy in the mid-sixties, the

A fuller report of the hearings, approximately twice as long as what is printed here and containing more quotations and examples from the speakers' presentations, is available in photocopy form from COSSA.

THE WITNESSES: DAY I • Herbert A. Simon, Professor of Computer Science and Psychology, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA • R. Duncan Luce, Professor of Psychology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA • Neil J. Smelser, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, CA

DAY II • Joseph P. Newhouse, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA
• Clark Abt, Abt Associates, Inc., Cambridge, MA • Walter Albers, Societal Analysis Department, General Motors Research Laboratories, Warren, MI
• James S. Coleman, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, and National Opinion Research Center, Chicago, IL • Douglas W. Bray, Development Dimensions International, Tenafly, NJ

DAY III • Francis X. Sutton, Ford Foundation, and Social Science Research Council, New York, NY • Albert Rees, Sloan Foundation, New York • Amitai Etzioni, George Washington University, Washington, DC, and Center for Policy Research, Bethesda, MD • Richard W. Pew, BBN Laboratories Inc., Cambridge, MA

relationship between government and science has changed substantially. Specifically, the federal role in support of the social and behavioral sciences as well as industry's utilization of these disciplines has expanded over the last twenty years." The hearings were chaired by Rep. Doug Walgren (D-PA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology.

DAY I: Basic Research and the Scholarly Enterprise

The first day of the hearings featured testimony from Herbert Simon, Nobel laureate in economics, and R. Duncan Luce and Neil J. Smelser, co-chairs of the National Research Council's Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, which is currently conducting a "Ten-Year Outlook on Research Opportunities in the Behavioral and Social Sciences." (See Update, April 5, 1985)

The three provided examples of recent accomplishments in research: Simon talked about economics, theories of decision-making, and cognitive science; Luce discussed perception, psychology, linguistics, health and behavior, social psychology, and methodology; and Smelser focused on the study of criminal careers, the processes of collective choice, and the increasing internationalization of social, political, and economic life.

A consensus emerged among witnesses that the social and behavioral sciences would benefit most from: 1) funding arrangements that would enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary research; 2) support for longitudinal data collection; 3) facilities that allow more advanced experimentation; and 4) more opportunities for international research. There was also support for creation of research centers akin to the centers recently established by the National Science Foundation (NSF) for engineering.

Rep. Walgren, noting that the political system has often been "unappreciative" of the social and behavioral sciences, asked the witnesses to comment on the difficulties these fields have encountered in the federal funding process. Simon suggested that since these disciplines are "closer to everyday life" and deal with "controversial questions," researchers sometimes antagonize decision-makers. Rep. Walgren asked, "How would you

argue legitimacy for the social and behavioral sciences vis-à-vis the physical and natural sciences?" Luce responded that the logic of both types of science is the same...the charge of non-cumulation often levelled against social and behavioral science is false...while a fully developed theoretical base is sometimes lacking in social science research, the topics are inherently more complicated. Simon noted that social science tends to enter the public eye only when controversy is stimulated by research results.

Rep. Walgren asked how to encourage cross-disciplinary cooperation. Simon thought a re-examination of "the boxes" at NSF might yield results. He cited cognitive science as an interdisciplinary field that has achieved the status to compete for federal funding.

Rep. Brown (D-CA) noted the "extremely important" contributions of social and behavioral research, but suggested that Congress is always looking for the basic research to be turned into a concrete good. Rep. Brown expressed interest in Simon's description of "expected utility functions" in decision-making theory -- and wished for some way to apply it to research.

Rep. Fuqua distinguished the social and behavioral sciences from the "exact sciences." He quoted an early evaluation of social and behavioral science research as "undistinguished." Simon reminded him that this had been a judgment on the Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) program, which NSF sponsored in the 1970s and dismantled when it proved ineffective.

In comments closing Day I, Rep. Fuqua acknowledged the social and behavioral sciences as a "very important part of basic research," and Rep. Walgren observed that "by their nature they cover almost all aspects of human experience."

DAY II: Utilizing the Social Sciences

The second day of the hearings focused on the utilization of the social and behavioral sciences by the federal government. James Coleman noted that "social policy research has become, over the past twenty years, an important element in social policy." He argued that the crucial question is not whether research useful to the government will be done, but "how will it be done?" The key considerations are: 1) maintaining the democratic pluralism of the policy process; 2) insuring that social policy research is done with sufficient independence to be objective, yet sufficient responsiveness to provide relevant information when it is needed; and 3) insuring that individual skills and organizational capabilities are available and continue to develop. Coleman argued that basic research would continue as the basis for timely applied research, citing the recent work by James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein, Crime and Human Nature, which pulls together a wide range of disciplinary research that can clarify policy choices on crime.

Joseph Newhouse described the Rand Health Insurance Study, a 14-year longitudinal experiment funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department

of Health and Human Services. He asserted that the Rand study yielded clear-cut, reliable findings on a major and enduring problem which could not have been successfully studied using existing data sets; and that it was an example of research costing millions that could save billions for society. Despite this Rand study, Newhouse argued that government underinvests in large-scale, long-term projects -- both randomized experiments and observational studies.

Both Walter Albers and Douglas Bray (who previously worked for AT&T for 28 years) described the role social scientists are playing in industrial R&D. Albers noted that in the 1980s social and behavioral science research in industry has become a "necessity." At General Motors such research includes: measurement of social change and scenario building; survey research; technology assessment and societal risk assessment; behavioral research related to such things as community noise, outdoor visibility, driver behavior, and risk taking; demographics; and some research on human resources such as personnel benefits and health care. The key words for social science in industry, according to Albers, are "interdisciplinary and quantitative." Bray focused on industrial organization research and its impact on management behavior and organizational culture. He noted that, "Behavioral scientists employed by industry usually apply existing knowledge rather than developing new scientific principles...it is evident that industry is a long way from devoting much effort to basic research." However, businesses will have to be involved with basic research because "business cultures can't be replicated by using college students as subjects."

The final witness of Day II, Clark Abt, identified himself and his firm as fortunate commercial beneficiaries of basic social science research, the production of which has been underfunded by both government and industry. In his view, social science research does not solve society's problems, but provides information that is essential for policy determination, and does so at relatively low cost. Echoing Newhouse, Abt held that social science has "a marketing problem" in communicating its cost-effectiveness. Abt predicted modest growth in industry funding of social science, in order to respond competitively to regulation, deregulation, and government-imposed incentives and constraints. He held that the level of social science R&D was less important than its continuity, maintaining that "the most expensive thing government does is to change its mind." Abt did, however, call for sharp increases in government-supported evaluation research, asserting that such action would prevent billions from being spent on unproductive programs. He pointed out that generally the departments and agencies spending most on programs spend least on evaluation and related research.

Rep. Walgren asked panelists to comment on the economic productivity of social and behavioral research. Albers remarked that social science in industry typically averts heavy costs or identifies overlooked opportunities -- benefits that are difficult to measure economically. Bray held that, in his area of worker motivation and industrial productivity, the benefits of research were essential to business systems, but similarly hard to quantify.

Coleman reported that, during 11 years on the science advisory board of General Motors, he noted that most of the problems that GM management identified as technical proved to turn on organizational features, incentive structures, and other managerial factors.

DAY III: Federal vs Private Sector Support

The third day led off with testimony by two foundation officers. Both Francis X. Sutton and Albert Rees described the importance of the over-50-year involvement of a few major American foundations with social and behavioral science research and training, but reported sporadic and inconsistent patterns of support for the core of the disciplines. Both reported that foundations generally are in an era of greatly reduced resources, and that there is little likelihood of massive investment in the social sciences by foundations in the foreseeable future, except to provide "venture capital" (Rees's term) in a few areas of priority to particular foundations. Sutton ascribed the decline not only to foundations' diminished resources but also to ambivalences in the general public (including foundation trustees) toward "surrender to the authority of experts...in matters that touch our intimate lives or seem to lie within the realms of practical judgment and experience," and to a growing general skepticism toward social institutions, the possibility for rational amelioration of societal problems, and the automatic usefulness of disciplinary knowledge in practical affairs. He emphasized the increasing internationalization of social science activity, in research, training, and application, and pointed out an impressive achievement in transnationally relevant knowledge and in the training of personnel, both American and foreign, by U.S. social science. Now, however, with opportunities for cooperative international research never greater, there are few funds for actual projects, international linkages, etc., other than inadequate and uncoordinated amounts that national governments may provide.

Rees described the Sloan Foundation as a much smaller foundation than Ford. Sloan has concentrated its social and behavioral science programs largely in economic research and, recently, in the stimulation of the new field of cognitive science. In economics, Sloan is probably the second largest supporter of American research, but at less than a third of the level of NSF. In cognitive science, Sloan and the corporate-based Systems Development Foundation have, in the past decade, invested major sums in the growth of this new interdisciplinary field, "in the hope that it <will soon be> firmly enough established intellectually to attract long-term federal funding." Rees dwelt on the importance of large-scale continuous data collection, saying that it was beyond the resources of foundations. In his view, "adequate, continuous, and assured support for basic data collection is the most important single way in which the federal government can support the social sciences." He pointed out that a unique longitudinal data base, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, had been saved from disastrous interruption in 1981 by a consortium of foundations, but warned that "the Congress cannot count on such rescues...to take place regularly."

Amitai Etzioni drew a distinction between the analytic capacity of the social sciences and the policy capacity, between understanding the world and being able to change it, and maintained that "the social sciences' policy capacities and resources are relatively underendowed." Etzioni held that because the importance of social science in the policy mode is not well understood, mission-oriented agencies tend to drift toward support of basic research of only a nominally relevant nature, and thus actually continue the cycle of nonrelevance.

The final witness of the hearings was psychologist Richard W. Pew, a leader in the development of engineering psychology and human factors research. Pew stressed the feasibility of pragmatically aimed research -- for example, the study of reactions of human users of new technology -- but he differed from Etzioni in stressing the close link between basic and targeted research: "<what seems like> common sense after the fact requires a lot of prior knowledge." Pew urged the devising of ways to support activity falling between investigator-initiated research and mission-oriented development.

Rep. Walgren asked what kind of case could be made for the utility of the social and behavioral sciences. Rees said there is utility in bringing attention to problem areas where the social importance is clear and the analytical tools are at hand. He cited teenage unemployment as a current area. He also cited a long-term impact that is often overlooked: the ways we think about human development, or corporate cultures and labor relations, or crime, depend on social science conceptions. Sutton agreed, pointing to the crucial contributing role social science played in the gradual elimination of famine in India, or in preparing for resumed diplomatic relations with China. Pew cited the degree to which human factors are already taken into account in industrial design.

Rep. Fuqua inquired why government and the sciences had trouble bringing multidisciplinary research to realization, when virtually all speakers in the hearings had put emphasis upon the merging of knowledge and methods from different fields. Was the problem in the organization of funding agencies? Must the disciplines themselves merge? Rees believed that government science programs did adapt to multidisciplinary developments, but slowly: it was not yet clear whether federal agencies would in the future support cognitive science at necessary levels. Etzioni tended to locate the problem also in government: When the Department of Energy was created, he pointed out, prominent national science leaders spoke to the need for cooperation between the physical and social/behavioral sciences, but DoE managers did not respond.

Rep. Walgren's final question was, What would your single wish for the future be? Sutton replied, bring basic research back to strength and replenish the "seed stock." Rees replied, bring basic research funding back to real 1981 levels, and preserve and extend the crucial data bases. Etzioni said, unlock the doors between mission agencies and multidisciplinary applied research. Pew responded, increase basic research and simultaneously target a few major problem areas for special development.

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