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NSF CONTINUED: COSSA TESTIFIES; SENATE COMMITTEE HEARS BLOCH

On May 1 and 2 COSSA testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, chaired by Rep. Edward Boland (D-MA), and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, chaired by Sen. Jake Garn (R-UT), on the FY 1986 budget for the National Science Foundation (NSF). Mancur Olson, Professor of Economics at the University of Maryland, College Park, represented COSSA before the House. William Morrill, President of Mathematica Policy Research, Princeton, NJ, represented COSSA before the Senate.

Both witnesses asked the Appropriations Committees to support the NSF budget submitted by the administration in February that included a 4.4% increase for NSF as a whole, a 19% increase for the social and economic science programs, and a 6% increase for behavioral science programs. COSSA also called for the restoration of the Ethics and Values in Science and Technology (EVIST) program, which the administration wants abolished.
In the House hearings, Rep. William Green (R-NY), the Ranking Republican on the Subcommittee, asked about the House action on the authorization bill (see Update, April 19, 1985) to 'freeze' NSF at FY 1985 appropriations levels. Professor Olson responded that any congressionally imposed 'freeze' should be applied only for total funding for the Foundation, and not in any across-the-board manner at the Directorate or program level. This would allow for the prioritizing among research endeavors at NSF to take into account the past histories and current needs of the various programs.

In related action, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, chaired by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT), heard testimony from NSF Director Erich Bloch on April 30 on the Foundation's FY 1986 budget. The Director, responding to a question from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), said that a 'freeze' budget for NSF in FY 1986 would require a reduction in the increase in funding for social and behavioral science research, among other reductions.

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) asked Mr. Bloch about steps NSF has taken to assure that "funny grants" awarded in the past by NSF in the "so-called soft sciences" would not be ridiculed by certain publications like the National Enquirer. The Director informed the Senator that proposals in the social and behavioral sciences undergo the same rigorous peer review process and must meet the "test of excellence" used for proposals in mathematics and the physical sciences.

In the same hearing, Sen. Kennedy strongly urged Mr. Bloch to continue the EVIST program, calling it "enormously important" to the acceptance of scientific research by the general community. Mr. Bloch said that indeed the EVIST program "had done a lot of good work," but it was time to mainstream it into the other research programs at the Foundation. He did suggest that a separate program solicitation for proposals on ethics and values questions would continue, but that the administration of those grants would occur in the other Directorates at NSF.

As noted before in Update, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has a dispute with the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee over which committee has jurisdiction over NSF. This dispute has precluded the passage of an NSF authorization bill for the last four years. Both Labor and Human Resources Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Kennedy asserted in the April 30 hearing that they wanted to settle this dispute and report out an authorization bill this year. However, most observers believe that it will take the intervention of Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS) to resolve the situation.

5/3/85
British universities are being urged by the national government to greater efforts at self-management of shrinking resources. After an initial round of budget cuts in 1980, the universities had reason to hope that Britain's economic situation might ease, and that funds would gradually be restored. However, according to the weekly journal Nature (April 4, 1985), that hope has been declared invalid for the foreseeable future. The universities have been encouraged by a special committee to select priorities in teaching fields and in areas of research, and to determine how to close out marginal components.

The essence of the move toward 'management' is the decision about where to specialize, given finite resources. The assumption is that comprehensive universities -- except for Oxford and Cambridge and a few other eminent institutions -- may be a thing of the past. Self-management involves inducing universities to set their own goals and make their own choices, thus relieving the national University Grants Committee (UGC) from a provocative exercise of external authority. To date, British universities have received large-scale formula grants, both for teaching and research, from the UGC. Particularly in research, formula payments appear to be on the way out. Universities are to study the feasibility and efficiency of their research enterprises, institution by institution, and show that they have done so before qualifying for UGC research support. Responsibility is to be shared by the faculties and governing bodies of the universities -- a process that is sure to bring bitter politics into play, together with charges of violation of academic freedoms. Observers predict that Oxford and Cambridge will be more or less exempt from the requirement to specialize; this is fortunate, since in those universities faculty committees exercise most of the governance of the institutions, and there is only a vestigial 'administration' to take the blame for hard decisions. At the University of London, the largest in the U.K., however, the decision process will be especially complex, as the various schools of the university clear their own decisions up through the central governing body -- or attempt to deal directly with the UGC.

Nature comments: "Come what may, British universities cannot emerge qualitatively unchanged from this period of upheaval." Included in the plan is the requirement that academic staff of universities be subject to formal appraisal of performance at regular intervals, not only when promotions and new appointments are at issue. Nature seems to approve, citing "positive benefits of sensitive assessment...too many British universities wedded to the notion that young academics will either sink or swim are allowing their indifference to the careers of new recruits to become a means of wasting talent."
British academics and observers are deeply uneasy, not only about the internally divisive effects of strategic planning but about the timing of the process. In effect, the universities are being asked for priorities and specific management plans before the exact government budget levels for future years are known. It is reasonable to suspect that a research program, once declared possibly dispensable, will in practice be dispensed with. British education leaders have also not been clear about such basic parameters as how many students should be admitted to which institutions, to work toward which degrees or certificates. That remains a topic of lively debate on sociopolitical grounds in Britain; an enforced contraction is not likely to elevate it.

An observer on the scene told Update, "The universities are being told, choose or close down. The 'red brick' and polytechnic schools are being told to develop ties with industry, and thus supplement their budgets -- but these are the institutions whose need industry may feel able to ignore." Another commented: "What if most universities independently decide to jettison small, expensive, or inefficient departments -- and these turn out to be the same departments across the board? It could mean the death of entire disciplines."

CHILD DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) invites applications for the 1986-87 Congressional Science Fellowships in Child Development. The program is open to scientists and professionals at the post-doctoral level with interests in child development and public policy. Early- and mid-career applicants are encouraged. The fellowship, which will begin September 1, 1986, provides the opportunity to spend a year as a member of a congressional staff.

The deadline for receipt of applications is November 8, 1985. For application materials or further information, contact:

Dr. Barbara Everett, Director
Washington Liaison Office
Society for Research in Child Development
100 North Carolina Avenue, SE, Suite 1
Washington, DC 20003
202/543-9582

COSSA WELCOMES NEW CONTRIBUTOR

We are pleased to announce that the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, has become a COSSA Contributor.
FEDERAL RESEARCH SUPPORT: INSIDE NICHD

In the April 19 issue of Update we began a series of in-depth profiles of certain federal programs of particular significance for the social and behavioral sciences. The following article is the second of a three-part series focusing on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. It examines the Center for Population Research, one of two extramural research divisions of NICHD.

Center for Population Research

The Center for Population Research (CPR) conducts the federal government's central effort in population research. Because population research is inherently interdisciplinary in nature, CPR was created to treat the subject in a holistic manner and to fill in the gaps left by other federal agencies. CPR supports basic research, while other agencies support primarily applied research or data-gathering activities.

Although the directorship of CPR is now vacant, the appointment of Dr. Florence Haseltine, an OB/GYN from Yale University, is imminent. Dr. Haseltine has been a recipient of NICHD research grants and is currently conducting a project dealing with medical genetics. Her interests include women's issues, day care, and 'in vitro' research.

Four branches comprise CPR: Reproductive Sciences, Contraceptive Development, Contraceptive Evaluation, and Demographic and Behavioral Sciences. Most social and behavioral science research is supported by the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch (DBSB). The change in the title of this branch in 1983, from Social and Behavioral Sciences Branch to Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch, was not (as implied in the Update of November 4, 1983) a down-grading of the social sciences but an attempt to include (conspicuously) certain technical, quantitative aspects of demography. The demographic research supported by this branch in fact includes a heavy representation of economic, sociological, anthropological, and historical research.

DBSB funds studies on the social, psychological, economic and environmental factors governing population growth and structure, and the impact of population changes on individuals, families and societies. The program funds mainstream studies of changes in family and household structures, why changes have occurred, how these new population units function in the modern world, and what these changes imply for children, adults, and society. Another area of interest is the social and behavioral factors which influence the initiation of sexual activity, effective use of contraceptives, parenting of babies, and delayed childbearing.

DBSB also funds research in less obvious areas. Because the Reagan administration has formulated a new population policy...
predicated on the positive influence of economic growth on motivations for population control, research is needed on the relationship between economic change and fertility. U.S. immigration policy has stimulated research questions on forces affecting population movement and the impact of migration on the U.S.; how population changes in foreign countries directly affect the U.S.; and the ties between U.S. population growth and that of other countries. Studies of data from foreign countries are needed as models to determine how U.S. population processes fit into a universal behavior pattern. Finally, historical demographic studies test the validity of theories which relate to contemporary human experience.

The Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch expects to award approximately $18.3 million for research grants in FY 1985. Awards made for unsolicited proposals form the core of the DBSB portfolio. According to Branch Chief Wendy Baldwin, encouraging the submission of unsolicited proposals is important for maintaining the vitality and creativity of the population research field. The Branch does issue some requests for applications (RFAs) in order to stimulate proposals in areas in which there is particular agency interest. RFAs issued for FY 1985 concern the consequences of infertility and fertility related problems and the use effectiveness of contraceptive sponges. Future areas of programmatic interest include motivation for fertility-related behavior, research on adolescent contraceptive practices, and the social and demographic aspects of infant mortality.

The Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch also has a budget of $2.1 - $2.5 million for contract research. A large portion of these funds currently goes to interagency agreements to maintain or supplement large data sets (such as the National Longitudinal Survey Youth Cohort and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics). These expenditures are made to increase the utility of large data bases for population research by adding items which provide information in such areas as family and household structure, fertility, birth outcome measures, etc. DBSB contract research has increasingly been affected by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980. This Act requires that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review proposed new surveys to analyze their potential burden on the public. In the past this review process could take 2-3 years. In the present administration the review process has become so onerous and lengthy that program staff have been discouraged from proposing any new surveys. Thus DBSB research contracts are restricted to a secondary analysis of existent data sets.

For more information concerning DBSB, contact Dr. Wendy Baldwin (or a member of her staff), Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch, NICHD, Room 7C25, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20205; 301/496-1174.

The next issue of the Update will examine the Center for Research for Mothers and Children.
Sources of Research Support: Smithsonian Institution

COSSA provides this information as a service, and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information.

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars is an independent institution, housed in the Smithsonian Institution Building. Created by Congress as the nation's official living memorial to its 28th President, the Center sponsors a program of advanced research and communication between the worlds of ideas and of affairs. The Wilson Center offers a residential fellowship program of advanced research at the postdoctoral level in seven academic divisions: Asia Program, European Program, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Latin American Program, International Security Studies Program, Program on American Society and Politics, and Program on History, Culture, and Society. Fellows must have a doctoral degree (or equivalent achievement for scholars from other countries), and have demonstrated scholarly development through published work beyond the dissertation. Each fellow is expected to define and work on a single major scholarly project on a full-time basis in Washington, D.C.

FY 1986 Budget: The Center will support 45-50 Fellows in 1986.

Funding Mechanisms: Fellowships in residence

Review Process: Outside academic review panels

Disciplines Supported: Social sciences and the humanities

Restrictions on Awards: Fellowship periods may range from 4 to 12 months. Stipends are based on the individual's salary for the previous year.

Success Ratio: Approximately 1 in 10 applicants receive awards.

Deadline: October 1

Contact: Fellowship Office
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Smithsonian Institution Building
1000 Jefferson Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20560
202/357-2841
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