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BBS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS CONSIDERATION OF SEPARATE DIRECTORATE FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The National Science Foundation (NSF) should give "consideration to a separate directorate for the behavioral and social sciences," according to a recent report presented to NSF's Advisory Committee on the Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences (BBS). A BBS task force presented the report at the committee's March 19-20 meeting.

Headed by Indiana University psychologist Linda Smith, the task force included Barbara Heyns, sociologist from New York University, Doug Medin, psychologist from the University of Michigan, Clifford Clogg, sociologist from Pennsylvania State University, William Greenough, behavioral neuroscientist from the University of Illinois, and James Gibson, political scientist from Houston. Smith and Heyns also serve as the behavioral and social scientists on the 10-member BBS Advisory Committee.

In presenting the report, Smith cited Herbert Simon's advocacy of a separate directorate in his 1989 testimony before the House Science, Research and Technology Committee. Calling the written report "conservative" for its masking of the frustrations felt by social and behavioral scientists, Smith noted that NSF treats these disciplines with "benign neglect" based on a lack of knowledge. Explaining the "explosion of knowledge" across the social and behavioral sciences and within the specific disciplines, Smith suggested these sciences were on the "edge of substantial and radical breakthroughs."

The impressive potential of the social and behavioral sciences is largely a result of enhanced computational power, Smith said. The impact of such power can be seen in the burgeoning of cross-national and longitudinal studies, the increase in the size of data sets, and the ability to study multiple levels of organization. Rapid advances in computa-

tional power have also helped behavioral scientists develop advanced theories of animal and human cognition, she said.

The task force report concludes that "a crisis of severe underfunding" afflicts the social and behavioral sciences at NSF. Foundation programs have responded through "conservation and rationing" and a tendency to support "safe science" at the expense of new and exciting research on the cutting edge. Research projects are now shaped to fit the funding sources instead of being shaped by the current state of knowledge, the report contends. For example, Smith noted, "many people who study human visuomotor performance and/or decision-making do so in situations remarkably reminiscent of airplanes (and perhaps remarkably unlike the contexts in which such behavior generally occurs) because they are funded by the military."

In light of the funding crisis and the fact that the social and behavioral sciences have matured to a significant degree in technology, method, theory, and the rate of discovery, the task force suggested "an organizational structure in which individuals at the highest level within NSF are knowledgeable and fully informed spokespersons for the science."

It was clear from the reactions of the Advisory Committee's biologists that the social and behavioral sciences are still considered poor relations. Some panel members noted the antics of former Senator William Proxmire, thereby suggesting the vulnera-

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bility these sciences would face standing on their own. Smith, however, vigorously responded that "she was willing to defend her science on her own two feet." Smith and Heyns were asked to supply the "10 major accomplishments of social and behavioral science in the past five years," as if they had to justify their discipline to the panel's biologists.

Clutter Responds

Mary Clutter, assistant director for BBS and a plant biologist by background (no social or behavioral scientist has headed BBS since the directorate was formed in 1974), called the report "a good start ... on a problem I recognize." She cited the inclusion of the social and behavioral sciences in most of the directorate's new initiatives discussed at the Advisory Council meeting - global change, cognitive science, biodiversity, and computational science. (These initiatives will be fully described in a future issue of UPDATE.)

Clutter suggested the need for more thorough discussion and supported the establishment of a committee to examine the structure of the entire BBS directorate. This position differs from the task force recommendation to appoint a larger, more broad-based and more representative committee of social and behavioral scientists to study the implementation process and implications of a separate directorate. (For the current NSF director's view see following story.) Stay tuned!

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BLOCH RESPONDS TO COMMITTEE QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AT NSF

National Science Foundation Director Erich Bloch responded last week to congressional questions regarding NSF social and behavioral science research. Posed by the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, chaired by Rep. Robert Roe (D-NJ), as part of its NSF oversight function, the questions concern the status of the social and behavioral sciences at the Foundation.

The committee's inquiries focused on four areas: (1) NSF's response to the 1988 National Research Council report, *Behavioral and Social Sciences: Achievements and Opportunities*; (2) NSF administrative arrangements for the management of research and educational activities in the social and behavioral sciences; (3) research and education activities in the social and behavioral sciences supported outside the Biological, Behavioral and Social Science (BBS) Directorate; and (4) the composition of the National Science Board during the past 20 years.

As it has done since the NRC report's appearance, the Foundation dismissed it as "disappointing." Bloch reiterated his opinion that the report "did not help us with the difficult job of setting priorities." The NRC's conclusion that more resources are necessary for social and behavioral science research only states a concern common to all disciplines, Bloch said.

Regarding the administrative arrangements, Bloch defended the current structure. "I believe a streamlined organization with fewer, not more, stand-alone entities encourages efficiency as well as maintains short communication lines," he stated. "We strongly believe that the social and behavioral sciences should not be isolated either organizationally or intellectually ... We want to lower barriers between disciplines, not create them."

Non-BBS Research Support

In FY 1989, joint programs between BBS and other directorates resulted in \$605,300 of non-BBS support for social and behavioral science research.

Additionally, FY 1989 direct support to social and behavioral science research from outside BBS amounted to \$5.9 million. Most of this funding was in the Materials Development, Research, and Informal Education program of the Science and Engineering Education (SEE) Directorate and the Information, Robotics, and Intelligent Systems programs of the Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) Directorate (the latter programs were once part of BBS before the creation of the CISE directorate). Behavioral and social science projects supported by SEE in FY 1989 amounted to \$3.984 million.

As for the composition of the National Science Board (NSB), 97 scientists have served on the panel between 1970 and 1990. Of these, 12 have been behavioral or social scientists. Of the 22 members currently on the NSB, two are social or behavioral scientists. Of the 12 who have served presently or during the past 20 years, there have been five economists, two psychologists, two political scientists, two anthropologists, and one agricultural economist. Three of the 12 have come to the Board from one place, the Hoover Institution.

NATCHER HEARS FROM NIH AND ADAMHA ON FY 1991 BUDGET

A question of balance pervaded recent hearings of the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. After more than a week of hearings on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and a hurried afternoon session on the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA), Chairman William Natcher (D-KY) still appears to be wrestling with whether it is better to fund more projects with larger negotiated reductions (cuts below approved levels of funding) or fewer programs at full funding. He also expressed concern that the rapid rise in the number of centers was negatively impacting the number of research project grants (RPGs).

Questions of this sort are challenging for institute directors, whose funding decisions are often made, in part, in response to congressional directive. Although in recent years the House has made noise about giving institutes a relatively free-reign, the

Senate tends to be quite specific in its direction of how money should be allocated.

Aging Institute

Director Frank Williams represented the National Institute on Aging (NIA) on March 15. Outlining NIA's priorities, Williams stated that unraveling Alzheimer's disease was a primary objective. As far as Ranking Republican Rep. Silvio Conte (R-MA) was concerned, Williams was on the right track both with his attention to Alzheimer's and his emphasis on neuroscience. (Conte led the recent initiative to establish the 1990s as the "Decade of the Brain.")

Natcher, however, questioned Williams's priority-setting as it related to downward negotiation and RPGs. In FY 1990, the agency received an additional \$9 million above its requested appropriation. Although the Senate included numerous earmarks, the House was reasonably silent about how the money should be spent: Williams followed the Senate directive.

As a result, much of NIA's money was put into increasing staff levels and establishing new centers, a decision which led to high negotiated reductions and fewer RPGs. Natcher questioned the logic of this decision, and Williams's answers did not seem to satisfy the congressman, who raised the issue three times during the course of the hearing.

Natcher also asked Williams about the Health and Retirement Survey (HRS). Williams defended HRS convincingly, emphasizing its use of a population-based sample and its inclusion of economic as well as general health concerns.

Child Health and Human Development

The March 20 hearing on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) was plagued by schedule changes, lengthy interruptions, and paltry attendance. Nonetheless, Director Duane Alexander managed to represent well the interests of the institute. There were some sticking points, however. Natcher's concern with balanced funding priorities reappeared, especially as related to center funding.

Natcher also asked Alexander about the Survey of Health and AIDS Risk Prevalence — the so-called "sex survey." The question, and subsequent follow-up both by Natcher and Rep. Louis Stokes (D-OH), gave Alexander a good opportunity to defend the controversial feasibility study. In FY 1990, the subcommittee specifically indicated that the Public Health Service should not proceed with the study; in contrast, the corresponding Senate panel made clear that it looked forward to the results of the pilot.

For almost a year, the survey has undergone an intense review led by Assistant Secretary for Health James Mason. Although a decision about the study's future is still pending, Mason did express personal support for the project at an earlier appropriations hearings before Natcher. This statement made on March 8 was the first public hint of progress toward approval.

Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health

Unlike NIH, the ADAMHA research institutes — the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) — do not receive separate attention from the House or Senate appropriations subcommittees. Collectively, the three institutes and the service oriented Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Office of Treatment Improvement presented their appropriations request on March 21.

Possibly because of the structure of the hearings, funding choices between mental illness and substance abuse, and between research and service, were confronted far more directly than competition for resources among NIH institutes.

With several members present and many observers in the room (Conte said it was the "biggest crowd since Elizabeth Taylor showed up"), ADAMHA Director Fred Goodwin led the far-ranging discussion. As followers of Goodwin's presentations have come to expect, emphasis was placed on "co-morbidity" of mental illness and substance abuse and on research as ADAMHA's "primary, defining mission." Although Goodwin did make several references to the behavioral sciences, most of the highlighted research priorities related to molecular

biology and neuroscience, including a major emphasis on medication development.

Several members questioned the administration's disproportionate support for ADAMHA's drug-related efforts. Conte, saving most of his praise for NIMH and its role in the "Decade of the Brain," asked if attention to drug abuse has detracted from other programs. Rep. Joe Early (D-MA) suggested that the war on drugs was being waged "at the expense of mental health and alcoholism."

Early, known for vocal support of health research agencies, chided Goodwin for "doing too good of a job defending (the administration's) budget" rather than putting forth his own professional judgment regarding funding needs. Throughout the hearing, Goodwin appeared particularly sensitive to the relative good fortune of ADAMHA as compared with NIH in recent years.

BOSKIN PURSUES IMPROVED QUALITY OF ECONOMIC STATISTICS

Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Michael Boskin has convinced President Bush to approve a multi-year federal initiative to correct serious problems in government statistical programs. Numerous professional organizations, including the American Economic Association's committee on federal statistics, chaired by Tom Juster of the University of Michigan, have voiced concerns about the quality, timeliness, accuracy, methodological soundness, comparability, and usefulness of the federal government's economic data. Boskin has made improving the quality of federal economic statistics a major goal.

Testifying before the Joint Economic Committee on March 1, Boskin outlined the recommendations of a working group of the White House Economic Policy Council. The group has produced interim steps addressing well-known measurement errors in areas important to the economy and public policy. The steps are also considered cost-effective and implementable within a reasonable period of time. Among the suggestions were:

- development of improved methods for data collection on the economy's service sector;

- faster improvement of and increased access to international trade data;
- improvement of producer, consumer, and international price indexes;
- revision of the U.S. system of national accounts to be consistent with the rest of the world's measurement of national income and product;
- improvement of the measurement of investment and saving;
- improvement of the measures of inflation adjustments;
- beginning of research on a new benchmark estimate of poverty;
- elimination of unnecessary duplication and exploration of ways to share data on business establishments;
- linkage of the Survey on Income and Program Participation (SIPP) with administrative records;
- continuation of efforts to improve the current population survey and the employment statistics program.

Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), who chaired the hearing, noted that these steps are only the beginning of a necessary initiative to repair the damage done to federal statistical programs during the 1980s. Boskin pointed out the 10 percent funding increase for statistical agencies' economic data collection proposed in Bush's FY 1991 budget (see UPDATE budget issue February 28, 1990). Sarbanes countered, however, that even if such enhancements were enacted, the portion of the federal budget dedicated to statistical agencies will have declined by one-third since FY 1980.

Boskin committed the working group and the statistical agencies to developing a comprehensive, long-term program to consider organizational, methodological, and other global improvements in statistics reporting. Boskin said he hopes to present options to the Economic Policy Council later this year for possible recommendation to the president.

ADMINISTRATION OPPOSES BERMAN'S FREE TRAVEL BILL

Havana cigars are not the only casualty of the thirty-year-old American trade embargo against

Cuba. Indeed, tourist travel to the Caribbean's only remaining Marxist nation is severely limited by the embargo. A recently introduced bill, however, would remove these and most other travel restrictions. Sponsored by Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), the legislation is supported by the Free Trade in Ideas Coalition, of which COSSA is a participant.

In a joint hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and the same committee's panel on Trade and International Operations, Berman clashed with administration officials opposed to his bill. Arguing against the legislation was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hankin, who faced tough questions from panel Democrats - and even a few Republicans.

With much talk of Eastern Europe from both supporters and opponents of the legislation, dispute eventually focused on the most effective means by which to undermine the regime of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Opponents of the legislation contended that economic pressure on the Cuban government would be undermined by American travel dollars. Hankin pointed to the Eastern Bloc's political disintegration as an example of successful economic pressure.

Supporters of the bill, however, would have none of that. Snatching the Eastern Europe theme for their own use, Berman and his allies argued that contact between Americans and Eastern Europeans was central to the democratization movement. Increased contact between Americans, he continued, would be the most effective weapon against Castro. Supporters of the bill also deplored the notion of restricting travel by U.S. citizens even while Eastern European nations are eliminating the travel restrictions long imposed on their citizens.

Bolstering the case for approval was testimony from a variety of interest groups, including Vietnam veterans organizations. In addition to its Cuba restrictions, current law forbids the organization of trips to Vietnam. While veterans may travel on their own, they are unable to participate in U.S. planned and coordinated expeditions. Veterans representatives argued that such restrictions are unreasonable and unfair.

Debate over the Berman bill follows by two

months the final approval of legislation which effectively prohibits ideologically-based visa denials. Enacted as a provision of the FY 1990 State Department authorization bill, the legislation was hailed by the academic community. Past visa denials have hindered visits by some foreign scholars.

COSSA HOSTS CONGRESSIONAL SEMINAR ON URBAN POVERTY

Politicians have long been frustrated in their efforts to solve the problems of urban poverty. COSSA's March 9 Congressional Breakfast Seminar, cosponsored by the Population Resource Center, brought three prominent scholars to Capitol Hill to discuss with policymakers various questions concerning the size and nature of America's urban underclass. Moderated by Isabel V. Sawhill, senior fellow at Washington's Urban Institute and a member of COSSA's Board of Directors, the session drew more than 60 attendees.

Gary D. Sandefur, professor of sociology at the Institute of Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, discussed the changing nature of poverty. He focused on three growing groups of special concern: single parent households, the working poor, and poor populations in concentrated poverty areas. Sandefur explained that while some economic and demographic factors affecting poverty rates are beyond the realm of the policymakers, social policy factors can be addressed.

Sandefur suggested that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) be tied to inflation, and he supported the provision of assured child support benefits to assist female-headed households. Sandefur also advocated an expansion of the earned income tax credit (EITC) for the working poor and

COMMITTEE OK'S SWEET NOMINATION

Despite vigorous opposition from numerous education and academic organizations, including COSSA, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved March 22 the nomination of Robert W. Sweet to be administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Sweet's nomination was approved by a vote of 9 to 5. (For more information on Sweet's nomination, see UPDATE March 9, 1990.)

suggested that migration assistance be provided to alleviate the concentration of poverty in areas where low-skill jobs are unavailable.

Erol R. Ricketts, assistant director of the Equal Opportunity Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, discussed his research in defining and measuring the underclass. In order to identify the underclass, he created a definition based on behaviors as well as economics. He searched for census tracts with high concentrations of female-headed households, high school dropout rates, welfare participation, and poverty. Ricketts reported 880 such census tracts containing 2.5 million people, 1 million of whom qualify as members of the underclass. The underclass, he found, is concentrated in cities and is overwhelmingly black and hispanic. This research, Ricketts asserted, depicts a growing urban underclass afflicted by a "special kind of poverty." Social policies, he stressed, must target not only income poverty, but also the behaviors that contribute to it.

Policy implications were further discussed by Richard P. Nathan, provost of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy and director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government at the State University of New York at Albany. Arguing for a "holistic" policy approach, Nathan advocated programs that stress a mutual obligation between government and recipient.

An active discussion period followed the speakers' presentations. Rep. James H. Scheuer (D-NY) pressed the speakers to explain the structural rigidity of the underclass. Other questions concerned problems of focus, particularly the dichotomy between institutional and individual change. While some attendees argued that real progress depends upon changes in individual values and behaviors, others countered that institutional reform is a necessary component of effective policy.

Some attendees questioned the efficacy of government programs assisting individuals in moving from poverty stricken neighborhoods to more promising areas. Arguing that such migration assistance raises significant political and integration programs, Ricketts suggested programs would be better geared toward building cohesive neighborhoods in high-poverty areas.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL INSTITUTES FOR HEALTH

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

National Center for Human Genome Research

Medical advances often given rise to dilemmas concerning their application. The Human Genome Initiative, an ongoing NIH project, is no exception. The initiative is designed to provide new information on human genetic structure. Once complete, this information will allow greater research on the detection and treatment of genetic aspects of disease. The project is expected to have a profound impact on individuals and society. Therefore, NIH is offering support for research of the ethical, social, and legal issues associated with genetic information projects. Specifically, the agency seeks information on:

1. Questions of fairness in the use of genetic information;
2. The impact of genetic knowledge on the individual;
3. Legal issues of privacy and confidentiality;
4. The impact of prenatal and presymptomatic testing;
5. The influence of genetic information on reproductive decisions;
6. Issues raised by the introduction of genetic information into mainstream medical practice;
7. The past use and misuse of genetics;
8. Property rights issues raised by the commercialization of products from the initiative;
9. Broader conceptual and philosophical questions raised by the Human Genome Initiative.

Projects should address these or other issues through interpretive methods of study.

Postdoctoral fellowships are also available to biomedical scientists to study ethics, law, or other topics concerning human genome implications. Fellowships are also available to individuals with doctoral degrees in the humanities and social sciences for the study of human genome research. The goal of these fellowships is to encourage cooperative study between biomedical and social scientists.

Application Procedure: Applicants should use the new form PHS 398, available from the following address:

Office of Grants Inquiries
Division of Research Grants
Westwood Building, Room 449
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

Deadlines: NIH receipt dates for new applications are October 1, February 1, and June 1. Funding decisions are made approximately 9 months after the receipt of an application.

Contact: Bettie J. Graham, Ph.D.
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