

GENERAL SCIENCE

# Research Support Blocked

Government support of scientific research was postponed for an indeterminable length of time by the veto of the National Science Foundation bill.

By WATSON DAVIS

► BY WITHHOLDING approval of the national science foundation bill and preventing it from becoming law, President Truman has postponed full-scale government support of basic scientific research for at least six months, probably for two years and perhaps longer.

The bill, given pocket veto after passage by both houses, was the result of two years of hearings, debate and compromises in congress. For a year earlier at the request of President Roosevelt, a committee headed by Dr. Vannevar Bush, director of the wartime Office of Scientific Research and Development, worked on a plan for peacetime government support of science and brought forth recommendations that did not differ markedly from the provisions of the bill finally passed.

The Bush plan of power vested in part-time scientific board won out over the single, responsible administrator type of organization vigorously favored by President Truman, the then Secretary of Commerce Wallace and the budget bureau. Both the House and Senate voted down the in-line customary type of organization, preferring to make a group of scientists responsible.

## Single Administrator Preferred

Polls among representative scientists showed that they favored heavily at the opening of the 80th congress the single administrator with advisory committees. But when Congress decided upon a foundation membership of 24 serving part-time, 99 out of a hundred scientists went along with this provision, confident that this administrative plan would work fairly and effectively. They pointed to the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics as a good example of a part-time committee that has administered research successfully for the government since World War I.

Scientists in all fields are disappointed that the national foundation bill did not become law. Some of them point out that control of research funds available for grants are left, by default, largely in the hands of the Army, Navy and Air

Force. They admit that military funds have kept in operation research projects of importance generally, not alone to defense. But they want to see research predominantly in civilian hands and the military research bureaus have agreed with them.

Scholarships for young research scientists were authorized in the bill as an aid to filling the depleted ranks of scientific investigators. This is considered one of the most important functions of the foundation, now delayed.

Both political parties are in favor of science, you may be sure, and the few members of congress who opposed the unsigned bill were careful to go on record for science research. While the unsigned bill, S.526, was a Republican majority measure, it had strong Democratic support and was based solidly on previous bills of the 79th congress.

Whether Congress will reconsider the matter of a national science foundation in its pre-election session in January and

enact a bill more to his liking, as President Truman hopes, is problematical. Real hopes for a national science foundation may be unjustified. Scientists confronted by some of the world's greatest and most urgent problems will have to do the job with what they now have. The government reinforcements aren't coming.

## Truman's Objections

*Excerpts from President Truman's Memorandum of Disapproval:*

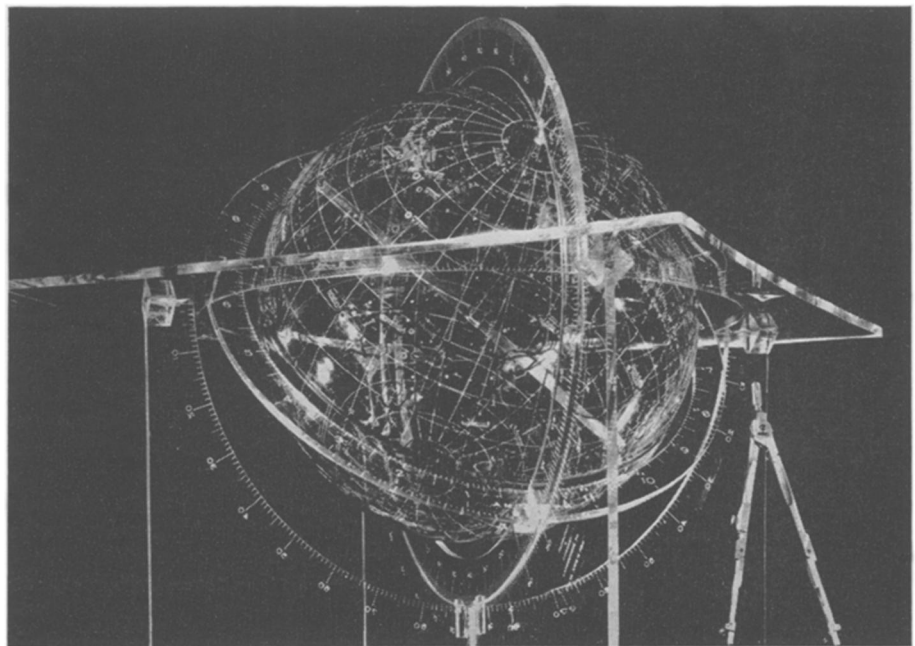
"I am withholding my approval of S. 526, the National Science Foundation Bill.

"I take this action with deep regret.

"The proposed National Science Foundation would be divorced from control by the people to an extent that implies a distinct lack of faith in democratic processes.

"The Government's expenditures for scientific research and development activities currently amount to hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Under present world conditions, this work is vital to our national welfare and security. We cannot afford to jeopardize it by imposing upon it an organization so likely to prove unworkable.

"Apart from the conflicts and confusion which would result from this complex organization, the bill would



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