

NAS: President Needs Advisory Council

For two years, relations between the White House and the scientific community have steadily deteriorated. First came the resignation of Presidential science adviser Edward E. David, Jr. and the disbanding of the Presidential Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) (SN: 1/13/73, p. 20). The official explanation was that since science serves many areas of government, each branch should maintain its own technical staff and that whatever advice the President might need concerning "pure" science, he could learn from the head of the National Science Foundation. Hence, foundation director H. Guyford Stever was given the title of Presidential science advisor, even though he would remain, physically and spiritually, at NSF—a safe distance from the White House inner circle (SN: 1/27/73, p. 52).

Unofficially, that inner circle was known to be displeased at the outspoken opposition of some PSAC members to the Vietnam war and with the generally anti-Administration view of many academic scientists. In fact, the new science adviser was not to report to the President directly, except on urgent matters, but rather to work through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the office of then Secretary of Treasury, George Shultz. Cavalierly dismissed were objections that Stever inevitably faced a conflict of interest in his dual role as advocate (for NSF and "pure" research) and adviser (theoretically telling OMB how much money to allot to each technologically oriented agency, including his own).

Congressional concern over this arrangement grew as evidence mounted that Stever, in fact, almost never was allowed to see the President and as rumors persisted that Nixon's real personal adviser on matters of science was someone totally outside the Government, Bell Laboratories President William O. Baker, who had led the Science and Engineering Council for the Reelection of President Nixon (SN: 7/28/74, p. 52). In an interview with SCIENCE NEWS, Stever said he was trying to cooperate with Baker and keep alive the idea that "basic science is part of the whole structure" (SN: 12/1/73, p. 343), but concern over the effectiveness of this tenuous relationship grew with the urgency of the developing energy crisis and Congress has once again begun to hold hearings to see if some new struc-

ture of Presidential science advising ought to be legislated.

Last week that initiative received a powerful stimulus in a report issued by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences. While expressing admiration for Stever's game efforts to fulfill his dual capacities, committee members found the current arrangement "inherently unsatisfactory and insufficient." In its place was proposed establishment of a Council for Science and Technology (CST) whose penetration of the Administration infrastructure would go beyond that of any previous arrangements.

Led by Chairman James R. Killian, Jr., who had served as President Eisenhower's science adviser, the committee recommended that CST be established as a staff agency in the Executive Office of the President and be composed of at least three members, selected by the President, who should have his confidence and enjoy direct access to him (compared to PSAC, whose members were generally considered outsiders). The council chairman should serve as a member of the powerful Domestic Council, the committee advised, and participate actively in the work of the National Security Council. Further, CST should be given a voice in foreign affairs by working with the Secretary of State in matters relating to international scientific and technological cooperation, and should work closely, as equals, with OMB in deciding what funds to allocate to various competing Government agencies.

In addition to advising the President and his staff on daily technical matters, the committee recommended that CST submit a yearly report on major developments in science and technology that might have significance for national policy. As a corollary suggestion, the committee recommended that some separate body be established to conduct longer range policy research and analysis.

Chairman of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, Olin E. Teague (D-Tex.) announced that the committee's staff would begin to draft legislation along the lines of the committee's recommendations. Having thrown the last science advisory committee out of the White House and personally sanctioned the rise of OMB in policy making areas, President

Nixon might well veto such a measure, but the White House is giving little consideration to this whole area at the moment. Vice President Gerald Ford, should he rise to the Presidency, is expected to be more responsive to such advisory bodies as the proposed CST.

According to the committee report, establishment of a Council for Science and Technology would help assure that responses to such crises as the oil embargo would possess a sound technological and scientific base. In addition, a scientist must feel "the future in his bones" (C. P. Snow's phrase), and CST would help assess the possible impact of new discoveries and be able to recommend proper steps to see that the impact is beneficial.

The Killian report was "strongly endorsed" by the Academy Council at its June 9 meeting and Academy President Philip Handler told SCIENCE NEWS the success of the proposed CST would depend on whether it could become "a part of the whole team" in the White House. □

Vannevar Bush, first science adviser, dies

Vannevar Bush, the first Presidential science adviser, who marshaled American technology for World War II and then laid the groundwork for subsequent Federal support of scientific research, died last week in Belmont, Mass. The 84-year-old electrical engineer and master scientific administrator had been in failing health for over a year, then suffered a stroke in early June and finally succumbed to pneumonia.

Bush epitomized the application of Yankee ingenuity to the complexities of advanced technology. A descendent of New England whaling captains, he loved nothing better than watching song birds near his summer house on Cape Cod and he invented a bird feeder that would support the weight of the small songsters but not any heavier bird, such as a pigeon. His ingenuity earned him hundreds of patents and, coupled with considerable enterprise, helped him achieve respectable wealth through the formation of several companies, including the forerunner of Raytheon.

But his special talent was techno-