



Nixon: "Crisis in American science and technology."



Humphrey: "Serve our nation's social objectives." UPI

THE ELECTION

Science and the Presidency

Three major candidates are all for research; but there are differences

by Philip M. Boffey



Wallace: "The marvel of modern civilization." UPI

As the Presidential campaign has unfolded, all three candidates—Republican Richard M. Nixon, Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey, and the American Independent Party's George C. Wallace—have pledged strong support for research and development. All three say they would use the capabilities of American science and technology to solve pressing national problems, and all three seem to accept the notion that national security, economic growth and an improved quality of life depend heavily on a strong research community.

Within this area of basic agreement, however, some significant differences emerge, most notably on questions of defense research, arms control and past experience in dealing with science policy issues.

Nixon's position on science and technology has been spelled out in greatest detail. In a position paper, is-

sued early in the campaign, he stresses the importance of research in general and weapons research in particular, asserting that, "Science and technology comprise a new Atlas that upholds our bright economic growth, our military defense, our educational system and our hopes for the future of man."

Nixon charges that budget stringencies under the present Democratic Administration have created a "crisis in American science and technology." Claiming that the present Administration is "effectively reducing U.S. research funds every year" and that "the American scientific community is demoralized," Nixon warns:

"Scientific activity cannot be turned on and off like a faucet. The withdrawal of support disperses highly trained research teams, closes vital facilities, loses spinoff benefits, . . . disrupts development momentum" and interferes with the education of future

scientists. Nixon calls for "responsible increases in subsidies for basic research" and a "new dawn of scientific freedom and progress."

Despite the lack of an elaborate position paper, enough is known about Vice President Humphrey from his previous record and statements to conclude that he is a strong believer in the importance of research. In one recent statement Humphrey pledged that "Science and technology will have a strong voice in—and a strong commitment from—my Administration."

He also takes a stand, similar to Nixon's, against cutbacks in Federal funds for research and development. "Cutting back research is false economy," he says. "As I have stressed from my earliest days in the Senate, we need expanded, long-term support for basic science and for education in the sciences and engineering."

The attitude of Wallace is less clear,



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partly because he has not said much about science, partly because his feelings about intellectual achievement seem ambivalent. On the one hand, Wallace's party platform calls American scientific and technological achievements "the marvel of modern civilization," pledges Federal assistance for research and training, and warns that "We live in a fiercely competitive world in the area of science and technology—for social and security reasons we must not lag behind." On the other hand, Wallace seldom lets a campaign speech go by without attacking "pseudo-intellectuals" and "pointy-headed professors who can't park their bicycles."

One seemingly significant difference among the candidates involves their views of the prime use to which science must be put, with Nixon stressing military needs and Humphrey social needs, while Wallace's priorities are not completely clear. The difference is more a matter of emphasis than of outright disagreement.

Nixon, in his science policy statement, emphasizes the contributions of science to national security and calls for an accelerated military research effort to keep ahead of the Soviet Union. "Today, the United States is short-changing its scientific community," he says. "We are risking the opening of a research gap between our effort and that of the Soviet Union."

Wallace, too, suggests that the U.S. is losing ground to hostile powers. His platform pledges that "We will place increased emphasis on research and development in the area of space, weaponry and mobility, as well as other areas vital to our national security . . . We will never permit a static situation to develop wherein America stands still while her potential enemies continue to advance in all areas of development."

Humphrey, while agreeing that a strong scientific community is vital to national security, sees no research gap and has issued no call for stepped-up emphasis on military research. Instead, Humphrey emphasizes the potential contributions of science toward solving the nation's domestic problems, including crime, urban decay, education, health, pollution and the conservation of natural resources. "Just as science has served our security and economic ends so well, it must now serve our nation's social objectives," he says.

Probably the most significant difference among the candidates on technical issues is in the area of arms control. Both Nixon and Wallace say the United States must retain clear superiority over hostile powers in the instruments of war; Humphrey, in contrast,

sees little sense in piling up more arms when we already have enough to destroy any aggressor. He is willing to accept parity in arms if this will increase the likelihood of a world arms control agreement. Supporters of Nixon and Wallace say superiority is necessary for national security. Supporters of Humphrey say the quest for superiority will accelerate the arms race without providing additional security.

These differing views on the arms race are reflected throughout the campaign. In the current ornithology, Nixon has a committee of scientific backers who are considered hawkish, while Humphrey has a group that is considered more dovish (SN: 10/19, p. 386). Neither Nixon nor Wallace says much about arms control, while Humphrey calls for "an end to nuclear testing under adequate safeguards" and "the control of chemical, radiological and biological weapons."

Moreover, Nixon, though voicing support for the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, urged that the Senate defer ratification in protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, while Humphrey, who has a long record of working for arms control agreements, urged immediate ratification. The Senate adjourned without action on the treaty.

On other issues, both Nixon and Humphrey indicate they would reorganize the existing Federal science policy machinery: Nixon, in accord with traditional Republican philosophy, stresses the importance of involving the private sector in the solution of major science-related problems; Humphrey, more than Nixon, stresses the role of science as a means for furthering international cooperation.

Neither Nixon nor Wallace has had much experience dealing with science policy questions, but Humphrey, as Vice President, is chairman of two Federal science-related councils, one on marine sciences and the other on space. (These roles emerged after Nixon's tenure as Vice President.) Humphrey says he spends more time on these two activities than on any other assignments. In his Senate days, moreover, Humphrey identified himself with many science-related issues and was a cosponsor of legislation creating the National Science Foundation.

Regardless of the outcome of the election, the next administration is expected to be sympathetic toward science. However, the prospects for an increase in Federal support for science and technology may depend less on the new President's attitudes than on his ability to end the budget stringencies caused by the Vietnam War.