



REUSS

No single factor, including balance-of-payment considerations, is overriding."

Both Sen. Harris and Rep. Reuss are eager to learn the views of individual physicists concerning the work of their subcommittees.

Choosing research proposals

Lately there has been some talk charging that federal agencies, when deciding on individual project support, give greater weight to proposal content than to individual accomplishment, to proposal pressure in a field than to the needs and opportunities in the field. *PHYSICS TODAY* sought to determine whether government agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, do in fact follow such criteria. We also tried to find out whether the agencies have established adequate followup evaluation of research results.

Do NSF panelists give too much importance to the ostensible merits of a research proposal and too little to the worth of the individual researcher? Interviews with panelists and reviewers indicate that the answer is "no." The consensus is that anyone who has participated in the evaluation process knows that individual past performance counts heavily with both reviewers and panelists. In fact it is often the main aspect of a research proposal to which these evaluators address their comments.

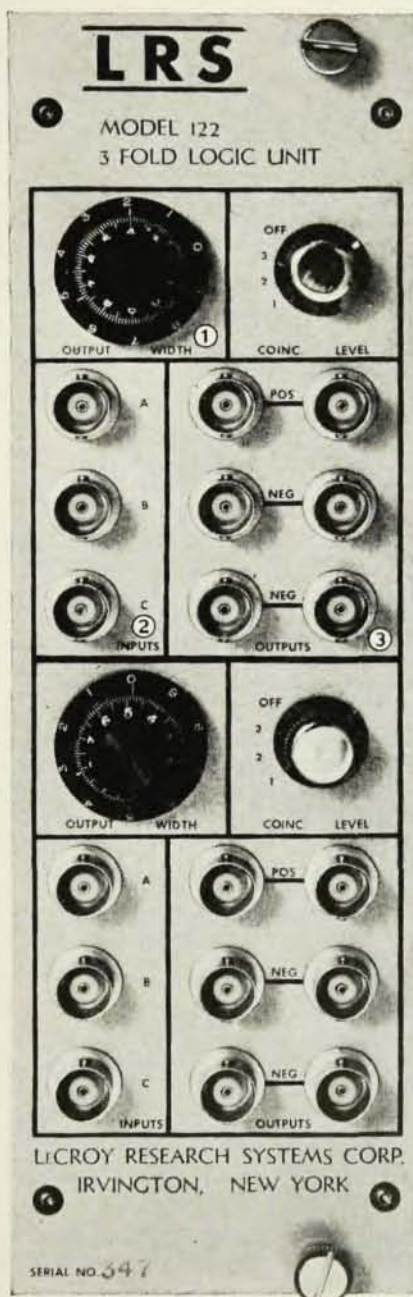
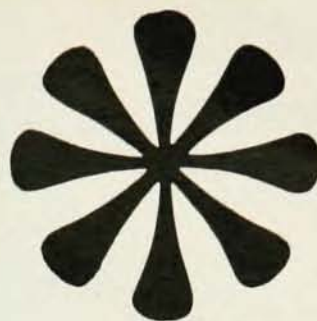
Does proposal pressure largely determine NSF support of a particular field? NSF director Leland Haworth says "The foundation constantly receives information from the scientific community which bears on the adequacy of support being provided. The foundation's program directors are especially sensitive to these error signals and make certain that this information is passed to the director.

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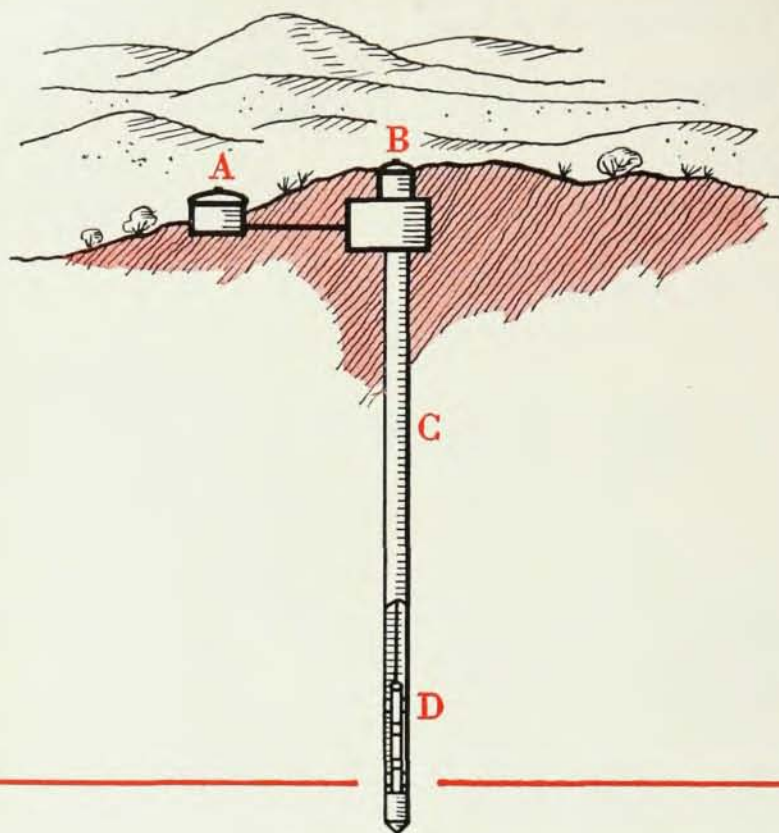
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... Our decisions are not simply based on response to demand. A conscious effort is made to emphasize those fields where the scientific challenge is greatest and where the time appears to be ripe for major advances. Reports from the National Academy of Sciences are particularly helpful in identifying needs for major increases in support."

Is there any significant followup of research results? Each year agency directors order their program heads to survey the short-term research results (published papers and discoveries) of projects the agencies have supported. Subsequently many of the more important projects are included in the annual reports of the agencies.

Long-term evaluation is another matter entirely. It appears that nobody in the government agencies has ever been able to work out a system that is both reasonable and workable. To trace the origin and impact of even a single scientific discovery requires an elaborate and impractical machinery. Federal administrators, however, continue to be concerned by this problem and studies are now in progress and will continue in an effort to find some solution.

Selective Service exam

Physics professors should remind their students to take the upcoming selective-service qualification test. Scores on this test will be used in conjunction with class standings to determine possible student deferments. Beginning 1 April students can obtain application blanks from their local draft boards and should send them, before 23 April, to Science Research Associates, the test administrator. SRA will then direct each student to one of 1200 centers across the country where the exam will be given on 14 and 21 May and 3 June. According to Mrs. Betty Vetter of the Scientific Manpower Commission, physics students should have absolutely no difficulty with the 150 'puppy is to dog, kitten is to what'-level problems. Questions on the draft can be sent to the Scientific Manpower Commission, 2101 Constitution Ave., Washington, D.C. 20418.