

PHYSICS AND GOVERNMENT

DOD will spread research funds

To the chagrin of many government-agency physicists, the Department of Defense hopes to use two thirds of its budgetary increase for research to start a new program for the institutions that now receive relatively little research support. With executive inevitability, a Johnson memo of last fall to his cabinet and agency directors, entitled *Strengthening the Academic Capability for Science Throughout the Nation*, has resulted in an \$18 million DOD "university program" that Secretary McNamara said will "broaden the research base by helping other institutions participate in [DOD research programs]." Meanwhile effects of the Johnson memo are already perceived in the broader geographic application of federal funds by many other agencies.

Specifically, the new DOD program hopes to accomplish three objectives:

1. build up new graduate research centers where they are now sparse
2. amalgamate some of the existing centers into small compact units
3. offer DOD research facilities to more schools.

Said McNamara, "With regard to the defense portion of this program, we plan to take the initiative and systematically visit universities that have not as yet had the opportunity to bid for defense research work. In the course of these visits, we hope to help these institutions determine their capabilities and inform them on how to prepare proposals."

Other agencies. When President Johnson issued his memo last fall, a committee of the Federal Council for Science and Technology was set up, under NSF Director Haworth, to determine how the agencies could implement the President's instructions. Moreover each agency gave Presidential Science Advisor Donald Hornig monthly progress reports that Hornig distilled and transmitted to Johnson. Each agency subsequently proceeded in its own way to carry out the instructions.

For example, the National Science Foundation will soon announce two new mechanisms of support for the smaller and weaker institutions of the country (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, April, page 69). The Atomic Energy Commission, replying to a *PHYSICS TODAY* query, said that "in the spirit of the Johnson memo, we will expand our national laboratories and contract research programs. In particular we are opening up more opportunities for the younger faculty members." The National Aeronautics and Space Administration asserted that "we have led in implementing the President's memo by our past [sustaining-universities] programs. We haven't anything particularly planned, but we will be guided by the memo in the future."

Criticisms. The new DOD program, it is said, grows out of a deeply American political tradition of populist support; it expresses not only the wish of Congress, but also the sentiments of a considerable fraction of the scientific community. Nevertheless there are some government-agency physicists who claim that their ongoing physical-research programs will be hurt by the new geographic emphasis. Since most of the DOD budgetary increase is allocated to the new "university program," very little additional support will be left over for existing programs. "Funds standing still means stagnation of programs," is a constant refrain heard these days.



Another argument directed against expanded geographic support by some scientists is that Congress and the people have been confusing research support with development support. They say that when we consider federal research support separately, our country has almost a natural dollar distribution per capita.

Whatever the arguments pro and con, the direction appears to be irresistibly toward greater geographic distribution of federal research money. A generation ago Senator Kilgore proposed that federal grants be distributed among the states on a quota system. Although his bill was defeated, we are still contending with ghosts of his ideas.

Whither Pake report?

Now that the Physics Survey Committee has completed its monumental study of physics in the United States (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, April, page 23), the federal government intends to use the report in evaluating physics support in the various agencies. To this end, the Office of Science and Technology has requested that an interagency committee be formed to study the Pake report and help propose government-wide policy and planning in support of university physics research. The chairman of this committee is Wayne R. Gruner, head of the physics section at the National Science Foundation.

In similar fashion, a committee is now being organized to study the Westheimer report on chemistry. Other committees studying the ground-based-astronomy and digital-computer reports have already completed their work. The National Academy of Sciences says that two additional studies now under way, concerning mathematics and the life sciences, will be completed in about a year and that they will likewise receive a thorough examination by interagency committees.

Overlap. Some critics of the reports have pointed out that the Pake and