

Science-policy unit

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committees and subcommittees in Congress. These requests require answers ranging from a single fact to research reports that may take months or even years to complete. Much of the information prepared in SPRD finds its way into committee prints and monographs, Congressional speeches and legislation.

To handle the diversity of questions asked by Congressmen, Sheldon has assembled a diversely talented staff divided among five sections. Leading the aerospace and engineering section is George Chatham, a psychologist by training but an aerospace expert and pilot by experience. Freeman Quimby, a physiologist, heads the life-sciences section. Petroleum geologist George Doumani is in charge of the increasing number of requests coming into the earth-sciences section (mostly dealing with energy matters). The information-sciences section is headed by Robert Chartrand, an expert in codes and computer systems. The fifth section, which Sheldon calls Management and Policy Sciences, merges earlier sections formerly headed by physicist Warren Donnelly and science policy expert

Frank Huddle. Donnelly is now with the Environmental Policy Division of CRS, and Huddle is engaged primarily in research for SPRD. Donnelly's former position was recently filled by Langdon Crane, a physicist who was director and professor at the University of Maryland Institute for Fluid Dynamics and Applied Mathematics.

SPRD is also divided into projects that can draw on the expertise in each of the sections, Sheldon notes, because so many of the requests that come into his division from Congress require an interdisciplinary approach. Current projects include one on energy, a national oceans policy study (requested by the Senate), and a futures research unit. Cooperative projects extend beyond the division into other parts of CRS, such as foreign policy and economics.

Not surprisingly, many of SPRD's most recent requests have dealt with energy-related matters—coal gasification, resource management, energy from oil shale and nuclear power, to name a few. Several years ago, many of the requests coming to SPRD related to the environment, just as requests of a decade ago dealt mainly with space. "The changing nature of the questions is part of the character of the division,

which is constantly changing to meet Congressional interests," Sheldon said. Lately, Sheldon has noted an increase in requests from Congress on the subject of science policy advice. This increased interest may be due to the lack of White House attention given to advice from scientists after abolition of the Office of Science and Technology, Sheldon believes.

Short turnaround. One of the last moves Congress made in the direction of improved science policy advice was the establishment of the Office of Technology Assessment, though, as its name implies, it concentrates more on technology than science *per se*. OTA was established in October 1972 but it was not until November 1973 that funds became available to the office. By law, SPRD is required to support OTA, and SPRD members have increasingly given principal technical support for OTA. "There are important differences between the functions of OTA and SPRD, although both exist to serve the Congress," Sheldon emphasized. "OTA's studies are designed to be relatively large-scale studies, to be done under contract. Most of our studies are in-house and require a short turnaround. And by their very nature, OTA's projects cost a lot more than ours."

Sheldon believes that whether or not OTA succeeds, Congress still could use a vastly improved mechanism for getting science policy advice as well as advice in most other fields. In fact, Congress is considering legislation that would establish an independent think tank for itself.

Meanwhile, in addition to answering Congressional and OTA calls for help, Sheldon's staff of experts maintains close formal and informal ties with key personnel through the federal and general scientific community. SPRD's public profile is admittedly low, but Sheldon agreed with an assessment that the division exerts an important, albeit subtle, influence on science policy and Congressional decisions in that area, an influence that is greatly underestimated by those outside Washington.

—Madeleine Jacobs

Enter the Committee on Science and Technology

The most ambitious change in the House committee structure since 1880, and the only attempt since 1946 to change the structure in any way, is how Charles Sheldon described HR 988, the product of the House Select Committee on Committees. Sheldon has been director of the committee's bipartisan staff for nearly two years. HR 988, which was replaced with a rival resolution by a wide margin of votes several days after we talked with Sheldon, would have had an enormous impact on the emphasis given to science matters in the House. However, even the much-watered down package—which made more changes in procedure than in jurisdiction of committees—will boost considerably the power of the Committee on Science and Astronautics, now renamed the Committee on Science and Technology. Olin Teague (D-Texas) is expected to be chairman, according to a committee spokesman.

Under the passed version of HR 988, the Committee on Science and Technology retains all of the jurisdiction of the Science and Astronautics Committee—overseeing, the government's general scientific programs including science policy, technology assessment, science fellowships and space programs. These are essentially the programs of NASA, NSF and the National Bureau of Standards. But, in addition, the Committee on Science and Technology gains jurisdiction from some other committees, notably authority for energy R&D from Commerce and Interior. The new Committee will also gain legislative oversight for the non-nuclear

programs of the newly formed Energy Research and Development Administration. Science and Technology now has jurisdiction related to R&D on civil aviation, the environment and weather programs and special oversight for agricultural, biomedical and water R&D. However, it will not gain jurisdiction over oceanography and nuclear R&D from the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, nor will it gain special oversight of military R&D as proposed in the original package.

Under the defeated proposal, a new committee on Energy and Environment would have been formed which would have included the present jurisdiction of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee (excluding Indian affairs and education, public lands and territories). It would have gained from other committees responsibility for energy policy, environmental policy, ocean air and water, solid waste, noise, ocean dumping, coastal zones, energy conservation and allocation, energy regulation and a number of other areas including non-military aspects of atomic energy. Instead, the present Interior and Joint Atomic Energy Committees survived with virtually no changes in jurisdiction.

As might have been expected, those committee chairmen and congressmen who would have lost the most from jurisdictional changes voted against HR 988. But Representative Richard Bolling (D-Missouri), who headed the Select Committee, says that the action to date is only a beginning in the reform and the process will continue in the 94th Congress.

in brief

Energy Conservation Program Guide for Industry and Commerce, a 212-page handbook prepared by NBS is available for \$2.50 from the US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Nominations for the ninth Fritz London Award for outstanding contributions to low temperature physics should be sent by 15 March to M. Tinkham, Physics Dept., Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. □