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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

Congressional Frustration

There is a growing feeling among congressmen that major procedural and organizational changes are necessary to restore Congress to a position of power comparable to that of the executive and judicial branches. Part of this unrest comes from congressional difficulties in understanding and dealing with research and development. Two weeks ago *Science* reported a Rules Committee proposal to appoint a select committee to investigate federal research, a proposal that is likely to be interpreted as an attack on research support and management. This interpretation may accurately represent the attitudes of some supporters of the proposed investigation, but it is not the whole story. Several of the sponsors have long supported governmental scientific and educational activities; and the strongest opposition has come not from the friends of research and development but from the chairmen of committees whose power might be reduced by the reorganization that a special committee might propose. In short, the argument is not primarily over whether R & D support has been too generous or R & D funds mishandled, but rather over how Congress should be organized to carry out its responsibilities.

Dissatisfaction is also evident in Senator Bartlett's proposal for a Congressional Office of Science and Technology that would serve Congress as the Office of Science and Technology serves the President and the executive branch. Earlier agitation for a cabinet-level Department of Science, the use by some committees of ad hoc panels of scientific advisers, and the occasional search for a qualified scientist to serve on a committee staff are also evidence of dissatisfaction with the existing organization.

Immediate and sweeping action is altogether unlikely, but as frustration grows, so does the pressure for change. There is some opportunity for the appointment of scientists as members of committee staffs, but it will be difficult to recruit top-quality men; such an appointment is not an accepted part of a scientist's career, whereas a comparable appointment is a commonly accepted part of the career of a lawyer or political scientist. Some weeks ago a *Science* editorial proposed the appointment, perhaps by the National Academy of Sciences, of a rotating panel of devil's advocates who would give Congress independent advice on proposals received from the executive branch and its scientific consultants. Senator Bartlett's bill would establish a permanent group of scientific advisers.

Perhaps gradually, but certainly not immediately, a change will come about, for Congress cannot continue to rely primarily upon the well-informed but rarely impartial advice of the executive agencies just because it is they who have technically qualified staff members and consultants. Senator Bartlett stated the problem in this way: "It is disturbing but true that at the present time Congress does not understand science and it is also true that science does not understand Congress. Communication between the two must be improved. . . . Congress does not appreciate the importance of scientific decisions and as a result they are made, not in the halls of Congress but elsewhere, not by the elected representatives but by unknown administrative officials."

The fact that Congress is growing uneasy about its lack of scientific and technical competence poses two problems for scientists. One is of perhaps special concern to political scientists—to consider organizational changes that will help Congress to acquire a greater competence in dealing with scientific matters. The other and more general problem is for scientists to consider how they can best assist congressmen and their staffs to learn more about science.—D.W.