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Mount Hadley, 12 kilometers north-east of the Apollo 15 landing site. The mountain rises more than 4500 meters above the cratered surface of Palus Putredinis (Marsh of Decay) in the foreground, and is a part of the Apennine Mountain front that forms the eastern margin of the Imbrium basin. See page 407. [Astronaut James B. Irwin, NASA]
NSF: A Look Ahead

One cannot long occupy the director's chair at the National Science Foundation without being struck by the fact that creative science in the United States is in a state of transition. And much of the feedback associated with this fermentation is focused on NSF, which in this country is often equated with creative science and scientists.

Science, as one of man's highest and greatest intellectual achievements, has had a pervasive and protracted influence on man, his way of life, and his environment. And nowhere has its power for change been so dramatic as in the United States. Most scientists hold that the destructive forces let loose by science can be properly focused and wisely used. Accomplishing these ends necessitates a major effort on the part of science and scientists—an effort dedicated to serving all of society and all of man. And while few can agree on the exact details, all concerned believe that science is indispensable for a future in which man is in reasonable harmony with his physical and social environment.

Historically, the National Science Foundation has devoted a large proportion of its resources to the pursuit of disciplinary science—research and science education motivated solely by the intrinsic needs of a discipline or the creative needs of individual scientists. This kind of programming has been highly successful and must continue, for it is the bedrock of all scientific enterprise. However, there must also be a heightened awareness of the requirements placed on all science, and for this reason a significant share of the total resources available to NSF in the future must be devoted to the social and technological needs of the nation. This, however, does not mean that the Foundation should be diverted from its earlier and historical purpose; in fact, this diversification should be construed as a means of strengthening that purpose.

To ensure success, this additional objective must have the cooperation of academic scientists, because a large number of the more creative scientists reside in academic institutions, and also because society and the nation have great need of broadly trained scientists who are highly motivated and capable of pursuing careers associated with the public interest.

To bring the best of science to bear on the social and technological problems of society requires at least three steps. A larger number of the most creative members of the scientific community must be encouraged to associate themselves with the great problems of man and society; for even though not all of the world's ills have a scientific or technological base, the thought patterns of science and its intellectual-material accomplishments are proof that science has much to offer society. The research and training institutions associated with creative science and the mechanisms used to support science must be more clearly focused and receptive to both the immediate and long-term interests of man and society. The National Science Foundation, as one of the most important federal institutions to promote the progress of science, must focus a larger portion of its resources on all of science—not just on academic science.

The social milieu within which the NSF finds itself has changed so markedly and so rapidly that we must not fail to accept the challenges offered by these new and pressing opportunities. We should recognize that, although science is one of the great cultural accomplishments of man, public support on the scale required for man's survival can be justified only as the needs of the larger society are recognized.