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## The Need for Priorities

If public policies are to be durable and survive the rigors of changing times, they must grow out of the deeply-held beliefs and values of the society. So with public policy toward science. If it is to be strong, it must first be relevant and it must be *shown* to have relevance.

If R and D is necessary to acceptable national security, or to better health care, or to control crime and violence, or to enrich education and learning, and if these are the central concerns of our society, then science and its advocates must learn to shape R and D accordingly and give it relevance. I suggest that here we find the source of today's support gap.

The Federal Government is at the point where very tough policy choices must be made about R and D. Our opportunities are sadly out of phase with our pocketbook, and it would be hard to think of another area of public action where the problems of choice confronting the Government are more baffling. Is it right, in the sense of good social policy, to underfund programs in education, environmental health, and Model Cities so that we can seize our opportunities in science and technology? Should we require that public investments in R and D meet some reasonable test of social return commensurate with the cost of investment and equal to or higher than the return on different uses of the same money and creativity? I am one who thinks we should. It is not good enough in a rational but troubled age to run a country on the double standard of prudence in private investment and simple incrementalism in public investment. This is precisely why we have been working at top speed to change and upgrade the Government's decision-making process and to inject better methods into the way Government works out problems of choice and makes up its mind what to do next. And I see no reason why R and D should have immunity from all this.

For the short run, it is going to be very hard to persuade the country and the Congress that R and D is being maintained at a poverty level. The likelihood of a fiscal miracle to extricate R and D from its present plateau is remote.

But if more money is going to be scarce for R and D, there may be some things that we can do to correct some of the deficiencies in the way Government deals with these matters. I think first of the Government's administrative and policy structure for science and technology. If our policies and strategies for R and D are hard to fathom, perhaps it is because we are not well-organized. R and D is decentralized through the Federal Government. It is managed as a network which is held together loosely by the White House science office. It does not have a prime mover. Its decision-making patterns are pluralistic. As an institutional process it is not responsive to standards of balance, purpose, or priorities. Its component elements serve as mission-related conduits for funding research, development, training, and academic science; but it does not function as a system because it wasn't a system to begin with. It seems to me that we need something better, something capable of shaping science goals and strategies with depth and range and visibility. We need answers; we already know the questions.

—WILLIAM D. CAREY, Assistant Director, Bureau of the Budget