

SCIENCE

Publisher: Richard S. Nicholson
Editor: Daniel E. Koshland, Jr.
Deputy Editor: Ellis Rubinstein
Managing Editor: Monica M. Bradford
Deputy Editors: Philip H. Abelson (*Engineering and Applied Sciences*); John I. Brauman (*Physical Sciences*); Thomas R. Cech (*Biological Sciences*)

Editorial Staff

Assistant Managing Editor: Dawn Bennett
Senior Editors: Eleanore Butz, R. Brooks Hanson, Barbara Jasny, Katrina L. Kelner, Linda J. Miller, Phillip D. Szuroimi, David F. Voss
Associate Editors: Gilbert J. Chin, Pamela J. Hines, Paula A. Kiberstis, Suki Parks, L. Bryan Ray
Letters: Christine Gilbert, *Editor*; Steven S. Lapham
Book Reviews: Katherine Livingston, *Editor*
Contributing Editor: Lawrence I. Grossman
Chief Production Editor: Ellen E. Murphy
Editing Department: Lois Schmitt, *Senior Copy Editor*; Douglas B. Casey, Valerie Jablow, Harry Jach, Erik G. Morris
Copy Desk: Joi S. Granger, Beverly Shields, Kirsten L. Wall
Editorial Support: Sherry Farmer, *Supervisor*; Carolyn Kyle, Michele Listisard, Diane Long, Patricia M. Moore, Melissa Quackenbos, Kameaka Williams
Administrative Support: Sylvia Kihara, Jeanette Prastein

News Staff

Managing News Editor: Colin Norman
Deputy News Editors: Tim Appenzeller, John M. Benditt, Jean Marx
News and Comment/Research News: Ivan Amato, Christopher Anderson, Faye Flam, Troy Gately (copy), Ann Gibbons, Constance Holden, Richard A. Kerr, Eliot Marshall, Leslie Roberts, Richard Stone, Dawn Levy (intern)
Bureaus: Peter Aldhous (London), Marcia Barinaga (West Coast), John Travis (Northeast), Anne Simon Moffat (Midwest)
Contributing Correspondents: Joseph Alper, Barry A. Cipra, Jon Cohen, Robert Crease, Elizabeth Culotta, Robert Pool, Gary Taubes, M. Mitchell Waldrop
Administrative Support: Fannie Groom

Art & Production Staff

Production: James Landry, *Director*; Wendy K. Shank, *Manager*; Catherine S. Siskos, *Assistant Manager*; Scherraine Mack, *Associate*; Linda C. Owens, *Macintosh Operator*
Art: Amy Decker Henry, *Director*; C. Faber Smith, *Associate Director*; Diana DeFrancesco, *Technical Illustrator*; Holly Bishop, *Graphics Assistant*
Administrative Support: Leslie Blizzard

■
Associate Publisher: Beth Rosner

Circulation Director: Michael Spiniella
See Letters page for additional Advertising and Circulation Staff

Science Editorial Board

Charles J. Arntzen	John J. Hopfield
Elizabeth E. Bailey	F. Clark Howell
David Baltimore	Paul A. Marks
William F. Brinkman	Yasutomi Nishizuka
E. Margaret Burbidge	Helen M. Ranney
Pierre-Gilles de Gennes	Robert M. Solow
Joseph L. Goldstein	Edward C. Stone
Mary L. Good	James D. Watson
Harry B. Gray	

EDITORIAL

President Clinton's Science Adviser

In the selection of his future Science and Technology Adviser, President Bill Clinton chose quickly and well. Jack Gibbons was in the spotlight in Little Rock on 24 December, along with major Cabinet designees. Gibbons brings to the president a unique mixture of knowledge and experience. The quality of his judgment and managerial skills in directing the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) has won admiration on Capitol Hill and among observers elsewhere. In many instances OTA assessments have been influential in the drafting of legislation. During Gibbons's 13-year leadership at OTA, more than 500 assessments were issued. They dealt with such matters as renewable resources, energy, materials, agriculture, health, environment, computers, and education.

The OTA is an analytical support agency of the U.S. Congress. Governed by a 12-member bipartisan board (six senators and six representatives), OTA works directly with and for congressional committees. The basic function of OTA is to provide early indications of the probable beneficial and adverse impacts of technology. Thus its director and staff are challenged to be future-oriented and aware of scientific developments that may affect society.

The lengths of assessment reports vary; the median is approximately 150 pages. They contain a rich body of factual material, some of it provided by experts at universities and elsewhere. In part because of the use of such temporary help, OTA, with a staff of only about 140 persons, has been able to produce drafts of reports in an unusually timely fashion. The drafts are subjected to numerous reviews by inside and outside experts to guarantee objective analyses. The reputation of OTA owes much to Gibbons's fostering of political nonpartisanship and his refusal to allow the analytical quality of OTA documents to be influenced by political expediency. For Gibbons and the OTA staff, the past 13 years have been a stimulating set of learning experiences.

In addition to good rapport with Congress and a broad spectrum of knowledge gained during his 13 years at OTA, Gibbons brings useful special expertise in areas that are likely to concern President Clinton. No future U.S. president can escape dealing with nuclear-related issues or with the need to foster orderly evolution of the nation's supply and utilization of energy. Before directing OTA, Gibbons was active in both nuclear and other energy matters.

After receiving the Ph.D. degree in 1954 at Duke University, Gibbons spent 15 years in nuclear research at Oak Ridge National Laboratory that included interdisciplinary work. His studies of mechanisms of nuclear synthesis of the heavy elements involved measuring nuclear cross sections for capture of neutrons having energies of the order of 25,000 electron volts. It was necessary to develop techniques for determining the velocity of neutrons traveling at 8 million kilometers per hour over a flight path of as little as 7 centimeters.* The techniques and results were important to nuclear theory and engineering. The results were relevant to understanding processes in stars and nuclear reactors.

As early as the late 1960s, Gibbons began studies of U.S. energy efficiency and conservation. In 1973, during the energy crisis of that year, he was named the first director of the U.S. Office of Energy Conservation. The office began a major research and development program on energy efficiency leading toward a drop in the nation's energy consumption per unit of gross national product. Going to Knoxville in 1974, he established the Energy, Environment, and Resources Center at the University of Tennessee. From 1974 to 1979, he served on many advisory committees and chaired the panel on conservation of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council Committee on Nuclear and Alternative Energy Systems. A paper based on a report of that panel[†] demonstrated a deep understanding of the problems and time constraints involved in modifying a nation's energy system.

To maintain his usefulness with Congress, Gibbons wisely kept a low media profile. His style is nonconfrontational and quietly factual. He is a good listener. He possesses an enormous fund of stories and sayings, which he offers at the appropriate moment. He is capable of managing well in the new situation. If his knowledge and judgment are utilized appropriately, the nation, the president, and science will be well served.

Philip H. Abelson

*J. H. Gibbons and R. L. Macklin, *Science* **156**, 1039 (1967).

[†]Demand and Conservation Panel of the Committee on Nuclear and Alternative Energy Systems, *Science* **200**, 142 (1978).

President Clinton's Science Adviser

Philip H. Abelson

Science **259** (5094), 439.

DOI: 10.1126/science.259.5094.439

ARTICLE TOOLS

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/259/5094/439>

REFERENCES

This article cites 2 articles, 2 of which you can access for free
<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/259/5094/439#BIBL>

PERMISSIONS

<http://www.sciencemag.org/help/reprints-and-permissions>

Use of this article is subject to the [Terms of Service](#)