

—fraudulent claims are made for healing powers.

In February 1969 a Court of Appeals threw out an earlier verdict against the scientologists on the grounds that the jury had no business to pass judgment on the validity of religious literature. Now the FDA is trying again. Although scientologists should doubtless be regulated by some government agency, perhaps even the FDA, the FDA's record of prosecutions against quacks, frauds, and other easy targets which are not a part of the powerful food and drug industry is anything but honourable. For example, the agency conducted a thirteen year battle against Dr Wilhelm Reich, an otherwise reputable psychoanalyst who claimed that his "orgone box" could cure cancer and other diseases. Not content with prohibiting sale of the orgone box as well as of Reich's works, one of which is a classic of psychoanalysis, the FDA in 1956 also sent an inspector to visit Reich's house and supervise the burning of his books, an experience that Reich happened to have suffered before in Nazi Germany. (Reich was sent to gaol for refusing to obey certain provisions of the FDA's injunction against him, and died there a year later.) This shameful episode was condemned by the American Civil Liberties Union, but the FDA has not changed its attitudes. "If Dr Reich were alive today and published the same books, the courts would burn them again," an FDA official said last week. This threat will not of course deprive the food and drug industry of any sleep, but scientologists and their like stand warned of the FDA's consuming zeal for rooting out all manner of fraud, as long as it is not pharmaceutical or comestible.

UNIVERSITIES

Entrepreneurs Win Out

by our Washington Correspondent

WEAPONS makers are not the only people in the business of bidding for government contracts—universities also maintain and have thrived on an entrepreneurship relation with government. Last year the federal government support of universities dropped for the first time since 1963, totalling \$3,227 million or seven per cent less than in 1969. But the Massachusetts Institute of Technology nevertheless managed to increase its share of the largesse, becoming the first academic institution to receive more than \$100 million of federal government monies in a single year.

An analysis compiled by the National Science Foundation* indicates that a

* *Science Resources Studies Highlights*, June 11, 1971. National Science Foundation, Washington DC 20550.

major share of the cut was received by academic science, which between 1969 and 1970 declined by \$193 million or eight per cent, whilst non-science support dropped by \$33 million or three per cent. Of the six federal agencies that account for the bulk of federal support of universities, the largest spender is the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which in fiscal year 1970 pumped more than \$2,000 million into the higher education system.

Of the other five main funding agencies, the National Science Foundation and the Department of Agriculture increased their support of universities by \$20 and \$26 million respectively between 1969 and 1970. NASA did better by \$4 million, but the Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Commission did worse (by \$13 million and \$7 million respectively), the former in large part because of the Mansfield amendment requiring that research supported by the department bear a direct and apparent relationship to military need.

SCIENCE ADMINISTRATION

NSF Staff Out of Touch?

by our Washington Correspondent

By encouraging administrative rather than scientific skills, the National Science Foundation lets its professional staff members grow out of touch with their field of science. So states an internal memorandum composed at the request of the NSF deputy director Raymond Bisplinghoff. The memorandum also alleges that NSF staff members are given too little discretion, are poorly informed about administrative developments affecting them, and are discouraged from participating in outside scientific activities.

The author of the memorandum, Richard H. Hall, is a sociologist on leave from the University of Minnesota whose one-year secondment to the NSF ended last week. Hall worked in the NSF's institutional grants programme and, when that was cut back, as manager of a programme known as "Social System and Human Resources" which is part of a major NSF endeavour called RANN (acronym for research applied to national needs). Hall's specialty as a sociologist is the organization of professions.

The chief criticism in Hall's memo is that no effort is made to encourage the NSF staff member to "remain as intellectually alive as possible through continued participation in his own research . . . and active participation in his professional societies". Instead, there is an "overconcentration on administrative skills as an advancement criterion" which "becomes highly dysfunctional when decision about the

quality of the scientific endeavour must be made". As an example of this discouragement the memo quotes a director of the RANN programme as saying he "wants very much to do away with NSF staff members' participation in their own professional life through research and other activities".

The isolation of NSF staff members from their field of science, Hall said last week, has two chief disadvantages—first, that the scientist turned administrator tends to drop out of contact with the "invisible colleges" or informal communications network between members of his own specialty and, second, that there is a leaning towards relying on rules rather than an individual's own judgment. For example, in assessing an application for a grant, an administrator would be more concerned with whether the applicant was eligible rather than whether his idea was good. Asked for specific examples, Hall cited only a pending case in which he believed a good application risked being turned down because of doubtful eligibility.

Other criticisms made in the memorandum to Bisplinghoff include charges of too much supervision and poor internal communication. "The professionals are given much less discretion than their training would suggest is appropriate and the hierarchy does little in the way of communication, but sometimes too much in the way of supervision. This problem is compounded by the . . . tendency to promote sheerly on the basis of administrative skills or even sheer seniority so that the situation arises wherein the supervisors have no knowledge of what they are supervising." In the Social System and Human Resources programme, the memo continues, "the social science professionals were told what to do after having no input into the decision-making process about what was to be done."

Enlarging on this theme in an interview last week, Hall stated that social scientists had too little say in the formulation of the RANN programme. There is no social scientist among the triumvirate that directs the programme and little input from the social science research division of the NSF. "In both the institutional programmes and RANN the social science research division is less than cooperative," Hall said. Although he had been "disillusioned" by his year in the foundation he believes the NSF is "a good organization, probably as good as you could get". What notice had been taken of his memorandum to the deputy director? None, except that one of the aides to NSF director William McElroy, to whom a copy of the memo was sent, told Hall, "We must talk about this some time."