

BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH

The End of Congress

by our Washington Correspondent

A NEW threat to the American system of government has come from a respected member of the scientific community and, if at least one congressman is to be believed, the threat should be taken very seriously. "I rise today in the closing hours of the first session of the 92nd Congress to discuss events and trends which may well eventually see the permanent closing of the Congress itself," Cornelius E. Gallagher said last week in a speech reported in the *Congressional Record*. The object of Mr Gallagher's political hyperbole and dread fears is Dr B. F. Skinner, whose book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* has been riding high in the best selling lists recently. Mr Gallagher is worried not so much that Dr Skinner's ideas "denigrate the American traditions of individualism, human dignity and self reliance", but that he was given federal money with which to advance them.

"I wish to disclose to my colleagues this afternoon," Mr Gallagher tells shocked readers of the *Record*, "that the National Institutes of Mental Health has granted to Dr B. F. Skinner the sum of \$283,000 for the purpose of writing *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*." Mr Gallagher hastily tries to assure his readers that he does not want to see scientists muzzled in case they produce results and ideas that run counter to the accepted way of life, since he points out that Dr Skinner has every right as an American citizen to free speech, but he is concerned that the federal government may be sowing the seeds of its own demise by subsidizing the advancement of Dr Skinner's ideas.

According to the General Accounting Office, Dr Skinner's grant was awarded by NIMH for a ten year period to free him from teaching and research responsibilities (Dr Skinner is chairman of the psychology department at Harvard) so that he can pursue "scholarly activities". The result, according to Mr Gallagher, who describes himself as not a literary scholar, nor a trained psychologist, is a book which seeks "to alter modern life by conditioning the behaviour of each citizen by positive or negative reinforcements".

What can Congress do to prevent agencies such as NIMH doling out federal money to scientists who have the audacity to use it to criticize the system of government and the American way of life? The answer, according to Mr Gallagher, is not to cut off such funds, but to provide Congress with a means of combating "antidemocratic thoughts launched with federal funds . . . to assure that the twilight of the twentieth century does not see the total eclipse

of the legislative branch". It so happens that Mr Gallagher has proposed the setting up of a Select Committee on Privacy, Human Values and Democratic Institutions that may do the job. Perhaps a better name for the committee would be the select committee on un-American activities.

RESEARCH FUNDING

On the Downgrade

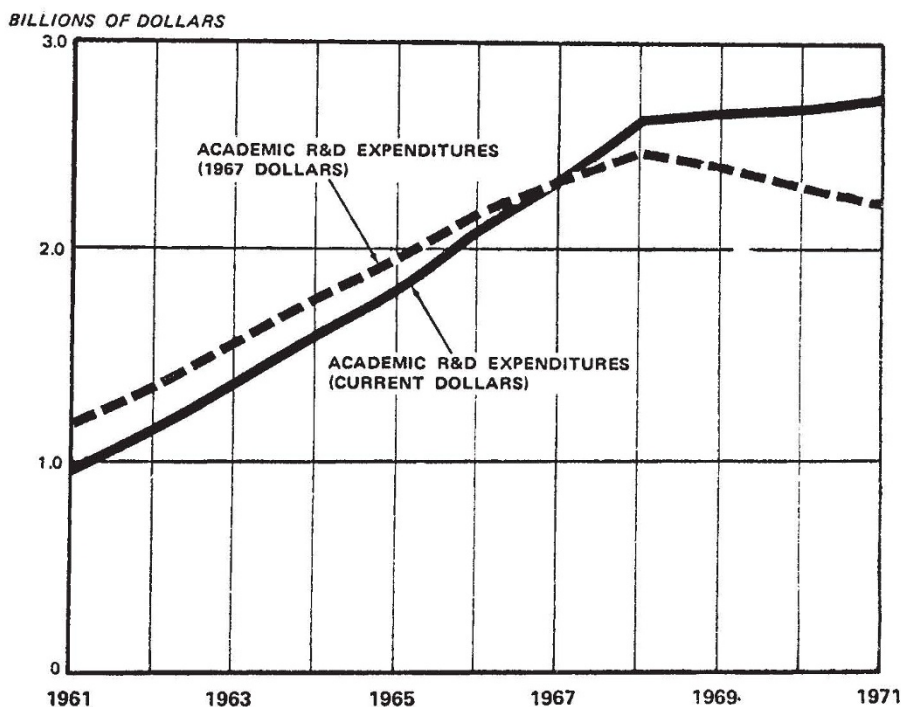
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Two reports released by the National Science Foundation bear witness to the recent decline in federal funding of research and development. The first report, published last month, shows that inflation has doubled the costs of academic research during the past ten years, and the other shows that spending on industrial research and development, in constant dollar terms, dropped eight per cent between 1969 and 1970. The net effect is that what seems to be a yearly increase in funds for academic research for every year between 1961 and 1971 turns out to be a decrease in purchasing power between 1968 and 1971 (see graph), and as far as industry is concerned, six per cent fewer scientists and engineers were employed on research and development in 1970 than a year previously.

One of the more surprising and significant aspects of the report on

academic research funding is the finding that inflation has pushed up the costs of academic research faster than it has pushed up general prices. In the early years of the 1960s, for example, the costs of research rose at almost double the rate of general prices, and the upshot is that \$1 million in 1961 would have shrunk in purchasing power to \$670,000 in 1971. Also, between 1968 and 1971, in constant dollar terms, funding dropped by 3.4 per cent a year. One implication of this finding is that if expenditure on research and development is calculated simply in terms of general price inflation, the actual level of funding in terms of purchasing power will be exaggerated.

As for the performance of research and development by industry, the NSF figures show that the total spent in 1970 amounted to \$17,900 million—three per cent less than the previous year, or eight per cent less in constant dollars. The entire drop in industrial research and development spending, the report points out, can be accounted for by a decrease in federal funds to industry. Between the two years, the federal share of industrial research and development funding dropped from \$8,400 million to \$7,900 million—the lowest level since 1965. Basic research performed by industry dropped from \$620 million in 1969 to \$599 million in 1970, applied research remained constant at \$3,300 million while development fell from \$14,400 million to \$14,000 million.



Comparison of academic research and development expenditures in current dollars with deflated dollars for the financial years 1961-71. Taken from *Current Dollars—National Patterns of R&D Resources. Funds and Manpower in the United States, 1953-71* (NSF 70-46).