New White House science council

Physics looms large on advisory panel

Washington

Dr Jay Keyworth, President Reagan's Science Advisor, announced last week that he is setting up a new White House Science Council to advise him on "science and technology issues of national concern" and of "changing perspectives in the science and technology communities".

The thirteen members of the new council will carry out tasks similar to those of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC), which was abolished by President Nixon in 1973. However, unlike PSAC, which reported directly to the president, the council will report to Dr Keyworth as director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Dr Keyworth in turn reports to the president's chief-of-staff in the White House, Mr Edwin Meese, implying a lower status to the Science Advisor's job than in previous administrations. So the Science Council, which is also distinct from the commission proposed by Congress in the Science and Technology Policy Act of 1976, will probably enhance Dr Keyworth's position on key policy issues.

The council, already being referred to as WHSC (or "wissick"), will therefore perform many of the functions of the President's Science Advisory Committee, established by President Eisenhower in 1957 in response to the launching of the Russian sputnik, and abolished by President Nixon in 1973 when some of its members took a public stand against his policies on anti-ballistic missiles and supersonic aircraft. But officials at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) emphasize that whereas the committee formally reported directly to the president, WHSC will report to Dr Keyworth, OSTP's director.

There was no official comment on the balance of academic interests of the members of the new council, with its heavy emphasis on physics and the "hard sciences", and, apart from Dr Donald Fredrickson, the former director of the National Institutes of Health, no expert from the life or social sciences.

It was stressed, however, that individuals had been selected as much for their broad perspective and judgement on science policy questions as for their particular areas of expertise, and that each member had been hand-picked by Dr Keyworth "after a considerable amount of deliberation".

"We were concerned to have persons who can deal with the range of issues that we understand to be the greatest interest to this office," said OSTP staff member Dr Thomas H. Johnson, who will act as the executive director of the new council.

The chairman of the council will be Dr Solomon J. Buchsbaum, executive vice-president of Bell Laboratories in New Jersey. Dr Buchsbaum is a plasma physicist by training, and is an experienced governmental science adviser, having acted as chairman of the Defense Science Board under President Ford, and chairman of the Department of Energy's Energy Research Advisory Board under President Carter.

Vice-chairman will be Dr Edward Frieman, also a plasma physicist and a vice-president of the La Jolla-based consulting firm Science Applications Inc. Dr Frieman served as director of the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Research during the second half of the Carter Administration, and before that was deputy director of the Plasma Physics Laboratory at Princeton University.

Like Dr Buchsbaum and several other members of the new council, Dr Frieman has worked extensively as a scientific consultant to the Department of Defense. The military connection is also illustrated by the links which several members have with the Department of Energy's Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, where Dr Keyworth spent most of his professional career as a physicist before going to Washington last May.

Dr Harold Agnew, for example, was a member of the original Manhattan Project team that worked on the atomic bomb at Los Alamos. He joined the laboratory in 1942, became a director in 1970, and left to become president of General Atomic in 1978.

Dr Edward Teller, now emeritus professor of physics at the University of California and widely known as "the father of the hydrogen bomb", also worked at Los Alamos between 1943 and 1946, and acted as assistant director of the laboratory between 1949 and 1953. Dr George Cowan, a senior fellow at the laboratory, is a radiochemist specializing in nuclear reactions who, like Teller, worked at the University of Chicago before moving to Los Alamos in 1949.

According to a formal notice which appeared in last Thursday's edition of the *Federal Register,* the council will have a

Keyworth irked by national labs

One of the first jobs for the White House Science Council will be to hammer out a policy for the national laboratories supported by a federal government. And, according to Dr George A. Keyworth, President Reagan's Science Advisor, the national laboratories must be reorganized so as to provide more support for universities on the one hand and for United States industry on the other.

Dr Keyworth was speaking in London at the annual lunch of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, a regular event in the social calendar frequently used by British politicians to make promises or threats to their own scientific community. Dr Keyworth's irritation with the US national laboratories, made conspicuous by the blandness of the remainder of his speech, may cause managers of similar laboratories in Britain to fear that their own paymasters would follow Dr Keyworth's hint.

Dr Keyworth said that the original missions of United States national laboratories are frequently outdated, and that the "many billions of dollars" they receive from the federal government are not all used to "further fundamental knowledge or to address technologies pertinent to our national goals". He said that the laboratories have been "subject only superficially to external review" and that their missions had only rarely been reexamined.

Yet, according to Dr Keyworth, the national laboratories have a logical role as centres for cooperative research involving universities and could even help to make good shortages of teachers of engineering and computer science. He also wants the national laboratories to help reduce the present "unacceptably high resistance" to the application of research.

For the rest, Dr Keyworth gave his somewhat bemused audience a self-congratulatory account of how research and development, and federal support for basic research in particular, were second only to defence in the protection they had enjoyed in the two Reagan budgets. Nevertheless, he said, the scientific community would have to accept a greater degree of discrimination — and more responsibility for making discriminatory judgements.

On international collaboration, Dr Keyworth said that the United States had come to realize the limitations of what it could accomplish on its own, and the opportunities for collaboration with Europe and Japan. He thought that the next generation of high-energy accelerators would have to be built collaboratively, and that there were already opportunities for broadening the base of thermonuclear research programmes, at present too exclusively dependent on tokamak designs.

Although Dr Keyworth did at one point emphasize that he was not to be mistaken for Mr David Stockman, director of the Office of Management and Budget, he left many of his audience with the impression of a man still preoccupied with the small print of resource allocation. ●

maximum of fifteen members, and will hold regular meetings up to six times a year. Some of the council's discussions may take place in public, since Dr Keyworth has said that he will comply with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires federal advisory committees to hold open meetings unless there is a specific reason that the meeting should be closed.

In addition to the members of the council, OSTP is compiling a list of about 100 other outside consultants from the scientific and industrial community who are expected to be called upon on an *ad hoc* basis to carry out specific studies.

Although both the apparent "military-industrial" bias, and the lack of social scientists — and women — have already received a certain amount of comment in the scientific community, reaction to the announcement of the new council has generally been favourable.

Mr William Golden, a New York banker who is treasurer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said last week that although the Science Council was "not as good as a presidentially-appointed group would be", it was better than none. He added that the individual members of the council were "first class", and that the new council should help strengthen Dr Keyworth's standing in the White House, since at present he was "not very high on the totem pole".

David Dickson

Council's members

Solomon J. Buchsbaum (chairman). Executive vice-president, Bell Laboratories

Edward Frieman (vice-chairman). Vice-president, Science Applications Inc.

Harold M. Agnew. President, General Atomic Company

John Bardeen. Emeritus Professor of Electrical Engineering and Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana

D. Allan Bromley. Henry Ford II Professor of Physics, Yale University

George A. Cowan. Laboratory Senior Fellow, Los Alamos National Laboratory

Edward E. David. President, Exxon Research and Engineering Company

Donald S. Fredrickson. Fellow-in-residence, National Academy of Sciences

Paul E. Gray. President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Robert O. Hunter Jr. President, Western Research Company

Arthur K. Kerman. Director, Center of Theoretical Physics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

David Packard. Chairman of the Board, Hewlett-Packard Company

Edward Teller. Senior Research Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Turkish civil rights

Trials ahead

Dr Yeter Ögelman, a Turkish specialist in thermoluminescence and a lecturer in physics at Cukorova University, Adana, until her arrest and imprisonment on 16 May 1981, has now been released on bail. Her trial for helping to organize a women's rights group between 1975 and 1977 will, however, be resumed on 10 March. The prosecution is asking for a prison sentence of between 8 and 15 years.

Dr Ögelman's plight was exemplified some weeks ago when an article submitted for publication in *Nature* recorded her change of address and relocation in prison. The article will be published very shortly.

According to the Turkish authorities, Dr Ögelman's arrest and prosecution fall under the terms of article 141 of the Turkish criminal code. This lays down that those administering societies "with the purpose of establishing domination of a social class or overthrowing any of the established basic economic or social orders of the country shall be punished by heavy imprisonment from eight to fifteen years".

The code has already been used to ban the Turkish communist party. However, Dr Ögelman protests that, contrary to the authorities' accusations, neither she nor the "Progressive Women's Organization" was associated with the communist party. She says the women's organization was formed to campaign for women's rights and for improved education for women in Turkey.

Amnesty International has taken up Dr Ögelman's case, and says that her arrest contravenes the European Convention of Human Rights, of which Turkey is a signatory. That convention guarantees the right to freedom of expression and of association with others, although those rights may be prescribed by law "in the interests of national security or public safety". The Turkish authorities have denied that Dr Ögelman's arrest contravenes the convention.

Dr Ögelman was one of more than 170 people brought before the courts on 15 January, and was one of the lucky fifteen released on bail. Most of those on trial were allegedly members of the left-wing school-teachers' association. Teachers' unions were banned nearly ten years ago, while the association was banned after General Evren's coup in 1980.

A number of academics have been arrested since the coup, and Amnesty International is unsure of their fate. A more general worry facing Turkish higher education is the bill announced last November that will further circumscribe university autonomy — for example, by giving the state control of senior appointments. The government's stated intention is to reduce the universities' tendency to act as foci for political disruption and violence.

Philip Campbell

European Space Agency

Peace declared

There is a new cheerfulness among the delegates to the European Space Agency (ESA). One sign of this, at last week's council meeting, is that the member governments have agreed on a resource budget for the next five years. The practical result is that it should now be possible to settle the annual science budget without waiting for unanimous agreement.

The council agreed to maintain the mandatory budget, which covers both science and the agency's basic running costs, at more or less its present level. Hence about 900 million accounting units (£540 million) will be spent over the next five years. But the director-general has promised to shift the balance in favour of science by making savings on the agency's overheads and by diverting interest earned on capital into the science programme. During the next three or four years, the science budget is expected to increase by about three per cent in real terms.

The increase is unlikely to make a substantial difference to the scientific community, which typically has to wait up to ten years for a particular kind of satellite. But the extra money may help ESA out of some of its difficulties.

The council's agreement is nevertheless something of an achievement. The level of the science budget has been hotly disputed for at least the past year, with some member states struggling to maintain their existing commitments and others, in particular France and Germany, arguing forcefully for a substantial increase. At the end of last year, agreement seemed beyond reach, largely because of Germany's wish to spend 20 per cent more on science after 1983. That would have involved all other member states increasing their contributions proportionately. In the event, Germany agreed to the five-year resource level with the proviso that discussions on the level of the science budget start again in 1984.

Last week's council meeting was notable for the formal announcement that Britain has joined the Ariane launcher programme as a fully-fledged member. Until now, Britain has contributed just over 2 per cent of Ariane's development costs through a bilateral agreement with France. The decision to contribute 3.5 per cent of the cost and to enter the programme proper is a recognition of the early promise of Ariane — and also of the diplomatic need to participate in other member' projects.

The quarrels of early last year seem thus to have receded. Then the British hankering after telecommunications and the French after the development of launchers polarized discussion of a ten-year plan for the agency proposed by Erik Quistgaard, the new director-general. The agency then had insufficient new applications programmes to fill the gap left

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