

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

As Chairman of the Committee on Federal Laboratories, I feel that the subcommittee's interest in increasing the flexibility and usefulness of existing Federal laboratories to avoid needless proliferation of organizations is a sound one. The extent of contracting for outside research and development, the creation of new Federal Contract Research Centers, and the disruption of staffing efforts resulting from periodic expansions and contractions of Federal research programs, have all been matters of concern to committee members, to Federal R. & D. officials, and to the Congress itself from time to time.

In this context the experience of the Committee on Federal Laboratories does have something to offer. Probably one of the primary reasons for the creation of new laboratories is the need for a rapid buildup or restructuring of R. & D. capabilities for specific programs. To the extent that Federal salaries do not permit the rapid recruitment of frequently scarce and highly competent personnel, to the extent that Federal examining procedures and the establishment of registers slow down the hiring process, to the extent that Federal leave and other benefits are not designed to accommodate the staffing fluctuations, and to the extent that it is difficult to terminate, retrain, or transfer employees with no longer needed skills, the inevitable tendency is for officials responsible for new programs to let new contracts or start new facilities.

There are a number of legislative and administrative steps that could be taken to alleviate the above deterrents to Federal laboratory flexibility. One is the ability to make short-term appointments to all levels of positions without conferring permanent civil service tenure and without going through the routine examination process. To attract the type of people needed, one should also eliminate such side deterrents as the inability of new appointees to take any leave during the first 90 days of their appointment.

There are times when new programs need to have the ability to hire scientists of other nations. A legislative proposal for a visiting scientist and scholar program that would correct some of these deficiencies is currently in the process of preparation.

Further restrictions hindering the ability of the directors of existing Federal laboratories to adjust to new and changing programs are administrative and budgetary controls on travel, which hinder training and informational exchange; unduly restrictive controls on manpower; extra-laboratory controls of various types on the number of employees at various grades and on average grade and salary levels; and narrow management interpretations of agency and laboratory missions.

The number of hierarchical levels in an organization generally has an increasingly restrictive effect upon laboratory flexibility as their number increases.

As a concluding statement I would recommend that, to the maximum extent practicable, laboratory directors be given an overall allocation of resources with which to achieve a mutually understood set of program goals. Within this general framework, administrative and management decisions as to the proper mix of staff, supporting services, facilities, travel, et cetera, should be left to the judgment of