

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By D. James Baker

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT that the Council with its newly elected members has now met and that a number of new Society activities are underway. The Office of Naval Research has agreed to provide support for awards to the best student papers presented at our meetings and for the publication of a career booklet and a booklet about how to prepare good visual aids and to give a good scientific talk. We have submitted a proposal to NSF, NASA, and NOAA for start-up support of an Oceanography Newsletter, support of students to attend scientific meetings, and the publication of a directory of educational programs.

We are also in the process of appointing a public education committee. As you will see from Connie Sancetta's summary of the results from the member questionnaire (see the following article), one of the highest priorities for our members was to get our message out to the public. Several people have volunteered to serve, and we look forward to an active group.

Preparation of educational materials such as viewgraphs and wall charts is underway. We welcome ideas about what to include and volunteer help. We are looking into an electronic journal. As far as meetings are concerned, we have decided that our next scientific meeting will take place in Seattle, Washington, during April 13–16, 1993. An announcement will be mailed later this year.

As you can see from the masthead, the Society office has moved to a new address in Washington, DC. The new space is contiguous with the offices of the American Meteorological Society, who have provided invaluable help in many ways to TOS. We are very grateful for this help. The new arrangements allow more space at a lower cost. We hope you will drop by if you are in Washington.

In the last issue, I noted that the proposed US federal budget increases in ocean science funding looked good, but still faced a number of hurdles. The situation is mixed now, with growth rates

at different agencies being very uneven: NSF and DOE are doing relatively well, but NOAA, NASA, and ONR have problems. Your letters and other interaction with Congress continue to be needed so that ocean science can make its case for adequate support.

There are several reasons for the budget problems. First, the total amount of money available for government spending is not growing as rapidly as expected. As you know, the world is facing slowed economic growth. On the US side, Congress has had to find money to finance the Gulf War, to bail out the savings and loan associations, and now to aid failing banks and insurance companies. The need for federal dollars in these emergencies, coupled with slower economic growth than expected, decreases the amount of funds available for discretionary (which includes science) programs in the federal budget.

Internationally, the economic problems are the same, and we have the added excitement of a Soviet revolution, Eastern European independence, and increasing needs from developing countries (ranging from economic aid to environmental protection). A reunited Germany is finding that the cost of modernizing East Germany is greater than expected. The consequence of all this is another need for funds from the developed countries, all of which will have to cut back on their programs—including science programs.

What's more, the international events lead to a changing world order with direct influence on national events. In the US, the collapse of the Soviet Union has led directly to reduced growth for the Department of Defense, including ONR, one of the traditional supporters of US ocean science. Our infrastructure is decaying—shore-based laboratories and instrumentation need replacement, and ships need upgrading. Unless something new is done, all the necessary funds will come from the research budgets.

Bob Detrick, in his excellent analysis of the past years' budgets for the forthcoming Ocean Studies Board report, shows that the sum of ocean science funding has not differed much from inflation over the past 10 years. The US Global Change Research Program is one reason that we have seen budgets grow faster than that recently. Programs like TOGA, WOCE, JGOFS, and related activities have enjoyed rapidly increasing support. But we are now seeing what appears to be the beginning of a leveling off of the funds for that umbrella program. For example, this year's funds for the Climate and Global Change program in NOAA have been kept at last year's level, and NASA's Earth Science Program is being constrained to the point where we may see an effect on the near-term ocean-related missions. All this is happening at a time when the community needs increased support for the ongoing and proposed activities of both individual investigators and cooperative programs.

Until now, we have all recognized that there will have to be significant budget increases each year for several years to come if we are to carry out the ongoing and newly proposed programs and continue to maintain a healthy individual investigator program. But we may be at the end of that road. I suspect that such leveling is inevitable, since it is very hard to sustain rapid growth rates in any program for several years in a row (no matter how meritorious). I would be very happy to be proved wrong in this, but my view of the budget process makes me pessimistic.

I think that all the organizations that look after the health of the ocean sciences, such as the Oceanography Society, our sister societies, and the Ocean Studies Board, need to consider this problem carefully. We need to look at research, facilities, and education. By working together we may be able to come up with a plan that minimizes the pain. □