

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 22, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
JAMES M. CANNON
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS
FRANK E. MOSS
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF UTAH
AND
OLIN E. TEAGUE
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

THE BRIEFING ROOM

10:48 A.M. EDT

MR. HUSHEN: The President met this morning with about nine Members of the Senate and the House on the issue of the science adviser.

We have with us here James Cannon, who is Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs and Director of the Domestic Council, to brief you on that meeting. We also have Senator Frank Moss, who is Chairman of the Aeronautics and Space Sciences Committee, and also Congressman Olin Teague, who is the Chairman of the Committee on Science Technology.

Jim will give you a brief outline of what transpired in the meeting and then they will be available for your questions.

Jim?

MR. CANNON: Thank you, Jack.

Just briefly, the President made known his decision to the group this morning. There will be a science and technology adviser to the President. He would like to have the office and the staff authorized by legislation.

He has opted in favor of a single director, someone of considerable ability and scientific standing. He will have assistants, perhaps a staff of 10 to 15 assistants, for specific projects. He will draw heavily on the scientific community around the country, and have task forces develop specific answers and resolutions to specific problems.

MORE

The anticipated budget that he would like to see is from \$1 million to \$1.5 million yearly. He will be sending up a message and sending up proposed legislation to the Congress on the matter in the very near future.

Q There used to be one of these, and then they did away with it, or what is the background?

MR. CANNON: Yes, there was. That is correct. There was. I believe that former President Nixon decided to transfer the basic responsibilities of the science adviser to Dr. Guy Stever, who, as you know, is the head of the Science Foundation.

Actually, there has been a science adviser to the President. President Eisenhower was the first to institute, I believe, a major science adviser, followed by President Kennedy and President Johnson and President Nixon.

Q What is the rationale for having one? I mean, is there some new situation that suddenly the President needs a science adviser?

MR. CANNON: No, I don't think it is a new situation, Helen. I think it is a continuing feeling on his part that a President should have on his staff available to him at all times for a greater variety of issues the best possible advice he could have on matters relating to science and technology.

Q And he has someone in mind? He has named someone, has he?

MR. CANNON: No, he has not named anyone. This has to be created by the Congress before he would name someone.

Q What is an example of the things a science adviser may do?

MR. CANNON: I think just to take a fairly obvious example, the catalytic converter auto converter, auto emission standards, is a matter which while we actually have consulted with a broad range of scientific opinion on it -- this would have been, to answer your question, a good matter on which the science adviser could have been helpful in developing this range of judgment on the matter.

MORE

Q Won't there be duplication between what the science adviser does and what the comparable officials do in other departments?

MR. CANNON: Not a duplication. I think that in a sense the other departments of the Government have full-time scientific and technological advice available to the Cabinet Secretaries.

At this time, although Dr. Guy Stever is assigned the responsibility, Dr. Stever has major additional responsibilities as the head of the National Science Foundation. So, he really has two hats to wear. It is the President's wish to go back to the system that was in effect, that there be someone on his staff who would be able to give him the range of advice he needs on scientific and technological matters.

Q And is the Senator going to introduce the bill?

MR. CANNON: I think perhaps the Senator and the Congressman would like to speak for themselves.

SENATOR MOSS: We actually have before us now a bill essentially of what we were talking about this morning. The President is going to send up his message with a draft bill, which will also be before the committees.

In fact, hearings dates have already been scheduled in June on the bill that currently is before us and those same hearings can be utilized to consider what the President now proposes.

Basically, we are in agreement because this is where the Congress has been reaching for some time. We held hearings last year on a similar bill. We didn't ever get it out on the floor, it was never voted upon, but the committees have been trying to get this science adviser established and therefore, we welcome very much the recommendation of the President which he told us about this morning.

My colleague, Congressman Teague, may want to make some statement on it. They have the same situation, I think, on the House side.

CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE: I think in both Houses of Congress, for a number of years, we felt like that we were not adequately keeping up with sciences as far as our Government was concerned.

MORE

This subject has been kicked around for two or three years. On the House side, we have had hearings the last two years. As a result of the hearings last year, we drew a very broad bill which we have spread all across this country to the whole scientific community and to industry, and we have asked them to come in for comments.

At the same time, we have been in close contact with the White House and this meeting today, the result of it, will be a hearing June 10 to 19 with Vice President Rockefeller as being the leader of speakers as far as a science adviser is concerned.

As Senator Moss said, the President would like for this to be a legislative something, a statute, so that is what we will do. We created in Congress two years ago OTA -- Office of Technology Assessment.

Now, that is an organization that is made up of six House Members and six Senate Members in an attempt to take subjects that cover all the way across a number of different committees and try to come up with some kind of an answer for the House, but we hope to make considerable improvement in this next year.

We feel that Dr. Stever has done a good job but that being science adviser and head of the National Science Foundation is just a bigger job than any one man can handle. So, we hope this year to come up with some legislation.

From the beginning, we have said we were not going to try to create a science adviser to the President he didn't want -- we are going to create one that he does want and that he will use, and that is one of the reasons that we have worked as close with the White House as we have.

Q How much will it cost?

MR. CANNON: A million to a million and a half a year.

CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE: It is expected to be a small staff of about 15, with one director.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

MR. CANNON: Thank you, gentlemen.

END

(AT 10:56 A.M. EDT)