

THE COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY PRESIDENTS - THE EARLY YEARS -

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The Beginning

In early 1973, Alan C. Nixon, then president of the American Chemical Society, approached a number of scientific society presidents with the idea of forming an organization to hold meetings, discuss common problems and take appropriate positions on behalf of scientists and the nation. The organization would be called the "Committee of Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP)." The first meeting was held on June 15, 1973, in Washington at the American Chemical Society attended by 13 society presidents. Ten additional society presidents joined before the end of that year. Dr. Nixon was elected first CSSP Chairman.

CSSP owes considerable thanks for the initial and continuing support of the American Chemical Society. As Dr. Robert W. Cairns, Executive Director of the ACS wrote me on December 6, 1974, "We are prepared to provide a meeting room, a mailing address, and mailing facilities. We would also take care of the physical arrangements for meetings and luncheons, as in the past." Not only did the ACS provide a home and seed funds for CSSP, but also the services of James H. Stack, Jr., the first CSSP Executive Director, both key success factors in the early years of CSSP.

The Model and the Organization

The model for this new organization was a recent initiative by the engineering societies to form the "Coordinating Committee of Engineering Society Presidents (CCESP)." Alan Nixon had established contact with CCESP and arranged for us to attend one of their early meetings. We concluded that a committee of society presidents was a good idea, but identified a fatal flaw in the CCESP structure: the requirement that all actions of CCESP be ratified by their respective organizations. (CCESP changed this requirement, and changed their name to the Association for Cooperation in Engineering, by the time of the joint meeting with CSSP in April, 1977.)

In the months that followed, organizing meetings were held and it was established that:

- CSSP will be an organization of individuals, the following statement to appear on all CSSP literature: *Except as otherwise noted, the views expressed are those of the individuals involved and do not necessarily represent the official position of their respective organizations.*
- CSSP will hold three meetings a year, and have an Executive Board, comprised of the officers and empowered to act for CSSP between national meetings where required by the urgency of issues.

While the original intent was to keep the CSSP structure rather informal, the need was recognized for some structure. Bylaws drafted by a committee headed by Dr. Ronald S. Rivlin, President of the American Mathematical Society, were adopted in 1976. CSSP then incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in the District of Columbia on January 28, 1976.

On March 21, 1977, on the recommendation of the American Physical Society, CSSP changed its name to: **Council of Scientific Society Presidents.**

The Ford Administration

Dr. Nixon invited Vice President Gerald R. Ford to be the first CSSP annual meeting guest. It was apparent that Mr. Ford would soon become the next President of the United States. Discussion over lunch at the Cosmos Club centered on science advice to the President. CSSP urged creation of a permanent Office of Science and Technology Policy, headed by a Presidential Science Advisor. Despite the admonition of Donald Hornig, Science advisor to President Lyndon Johnson, who once said: "There is nothing sadder than an advisor whose advice isn't wanted," we argued that never again should a President be able, as did President Nixon in 1973, to fire his science advisor by abolishing his office. The Vice President agreed, and said he would support legislation to create such an office. He invited follow-up from individual CSSP members.

On March 11, 1974, I meet with Mr. Ford in his office, provided background on previous science advisors to presidents, and repeated the CSSP position. He shared our view and asked for support to his efforts to generate legislation which would create by statute an office of science advisor in the Executive Branch of the government. Over the next several months, CSSP members, individually and collectively, worked aggressively to get out the message supporting creation of a White House office of science advisor:

- On September 18, 1974, CSSP wrote to Senator Edward M. Kennedy in support of S. 32;
- on October 9, 1974, CSSP met with Senator Kennedy to discuss improving the system of providing technological advice to the White House, and to present to the Senator a copy of the CSSP, "Arguments for Scientific and Technological Counsel at the Executive Office Level;"
- On October 9, 1974, CSSP sent a resolution to the President urging establishment of a White House "Council on Science and Technology;"
- On June 9, 1975, the President sent legislation to the Congress proposing the establishment of an Office of Technology Policy (OSTP) in the Executive Office of the President. The CSSP chairman was an invited guest at this message presentation.
- On June 23, 1975, as Chairman of CSSP, I was invited by Olin E. Teague, Chairman of the House Committee on Science and Technology, to appear as a witness on the proposed, "National Science Policy and Organization Act of 1975." Dr. Alan Nixon's letter of October 9, 1974, from CSSP to the President, was read into the record and, at the request of the House committee, further input was requested from all members of CSSP. **On November 6, 1975, the House passed legislation acceptable to the President (H.R. 10230).**
- On December 18, 1975, letters were sent by CSSP to Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Frank E. Moss, chairmen of key Senate committees, urging support of legislation to establish the White Office of OSTP. **On February 4, 1976, the Senate passed their bill (S.32).**
- **On May 11, 1976, the President signed into law H.R.10230, the National Science and Technology Policy, Organization and Priorities Act of 1976 in an East Garden ceremony.** The Chairman of CSSP was an invited participant (and have a pen for the archives of CSSP from this ceremony!).

On December 19, 1974, CSSP sent a letter to the President expressing concern about a proposed decrease in the R&D budget.

On February 26, 1976, the President sent to the Congress a comprehensive message reiterating the importance of energy independence and urging action on needed legislation. CSSP was an invited guest to this message presentation in the White House.

During August, 1976, many CSSP members as individuals joined the Engineers' and Scientists' Joint Committee on Pensions in support of the so-called "Mini-Keogh" and "Limited Employment Retirement Account (LERA)" sections of pending pension legislation.

On December 1, 1976, Dr. H. Guyford Stever presented to CSSP his first progress report after becoming Director of the OSTP.

On December 3, 1976, on one of his last days in office, I met with President Ford in the Oval Office to present compliments, on behalf of CSSP and all the members of our respective organizations, for his persistent and successful efforts to establish the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office. The President responded with a personal letter on December 17, 1976.

National Science Foundation

Starting in 1974, CSSP established a relationship with NSF, and responded on several occasions to requests for comment on annual programs and budgets. Meetings were held with NSF, the Office of Management, and testimony provided, as described below.

In December, 1974, shortly after being elected the second chairman of CSSP, I was invited by Dr. H. Guyford Stever, then serving as both Director of the National Science Foundation and Science Advisor to the President, for a two-hour meeting to discuss a very wide range of topics relating to changes in science, changes in the federal science advisory apparatus, the role of CSSP in federal science affairs, and long-term planning for R&D and scientific manpower. (See C&EN, Jan. 27, 1975, p. 18)

On June 3, 1976, a mailgram was sent by CSSP to the 26 members of the House Appropriations Committee to protest their vote to cut \$56 million in funds for basic research. We stated, "This reduction in the President's request for funds for the NSF not only provides for no real growth in 1977, but ignores the fact that in real terms federal support of basic research has been declining steadily over the past ten years." **A subsequent vote restored these funds.**

On February 8, 1977, in response to a request by the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology of the House Committee on Science and Technology, CSSP was invited, along with Dr. Richard Atkinson, Acting Director of NSF and Dr. Norman Hackerman, Chairman of the National Science Board and President of Rice University, provided testimony on the 1978 NSF Authorization legislation. I invited Dr. Ronald S. Rivlin, President of the Society of Rheology and Centennial University Professor and Director of the Center for the Application of Mathematics at Lehigh University, and Dr. Chien-Shiung Wu, President of the American Physical Society and Pupin Professor of Physics at Columbia University, to join me in providing this testimony.

In May, 1977, NSF recommended, "the creation of an informal communications feed-back system between the NSF Director and the chairperson of CSSP to keep each institution up-to-date on events affecting U.S. science or our respective institutions."

Advisory Groups on Science and Technology

On November 12, 1975, to facilitate planning activities of the new OSTP, President Ford directed Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, working with Science Advisor H. Guyford Stever, to bring together two groups of experts on two major areas that would be important to the new office in providing advice on scientific and technical aspects of issues and policies that would have to be addressed at the highest level of government:

- *Contribution of Technology to Economic Strength*, chaired by Dr. Simon Ramo, Vice Chairman of the Board, TRW
- *Anticipated Advances in Science and Technology*, chaired by Dr. William O. Baker, President, Bell Laboratories

As Chairman of CSSP, I was invited by Dr. Baker to participate in the series of meetings, to be held throughout the country during 1975-1976, to provide a linkage to scientific societies, and a resource on experts as needed for discussions on the specific issues as needed. Specific requests were forwarded to the CSSP members over the course of the work of these committees. For example, the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Society on Rheology supplied experts to support the work of specific Advisory Group Subcommittees.

National Research Council

On May 20, 1976, CSSP was invited to meet with representatives of 57 Corresponding Societies of the Assembly of Mathematical and Physical Sciences "to discuss ways that the Assembly might improve interaction with its Corresponding Societies and to foster cooperative endeavors."

Also, in a meeting at the National Academy of Sciences on September 20, 1977, CSSP was asked to participate and to contribute to a study conducted by the NRC on behalf of the Department of State to assist the Government prepare for an international symposium to aid Third World development (described below).

Science Court

At its annual meeting on December 1, 1976, CSSP endorsed "an experiment to determine the value of the Concept of a Science Court." The idea was not new, but the call for experiments to determine the value of a special panel to weigh facts in controversial issues, as advocated by Dr. Arthur Kantrowitz, Chairman of Avco Everett Research Laboratories, was gaining support. The position by CSSP turned out to be controversial, particularly in light of a lead article in the Sunday New York Times, January 2, 1977, which appeared under the headline: "28 LEADERS ENDORSE SCIENCE COURT TEST." The Times article was accurate, but the writer unfortunately included in the article some names of well-known CSSP members (apparently selected from the letterhead), three of whom took serious exception to being listed as individuals. The CSSP statement was also published in the June 1977 issue of *Chemtech*.

The Professor Benjamin Levich Matter

Among the early controversial matters at CSSP, was the appearance of Dr. Yvgeny Levich, an Israeli physicist, before the Council, and plead for action on behalf of his father, Professor Benjamin Levich, whose application for an exit visa had been blocked by Soviet authorities for over seven years. Professor Levich, then a corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, head of

the theoretical department in the Institute of Electrochemistry in Moscow, and the father of physico-chemical hydrodynamics, was the highest ranking Soviet Jewish scientist who had applied for emigration from the USSR. Two CSSP members (whose societies were involved in geophysical exploration) objected to his appearance at a CSSP meeting, and threatened to withdraw. They were concerned that his appearance would be interpreted as "pro-Israel," which their largely Arab clients might not understand nor support.

Nevertheless, Dr. Levich did address the summer 1976 CSSP meeting, and told a frightening story. Support to "refusenicks" from political and scientific leaders around the world was increasing, and CSSP members, individually and collectively, joined the protests being submitted to the Soviet Academy of Scientists.

On April 27, 1977, during the CSSP Spring Meeting, I received a phone call from Vienna. Professor Levich with his wife had just landed, and had placed phone calls to CSSP, to Philip Handler, then President of the National Academy of Sciences, and to Senator Ted Kennedy. Professor Levich asked me to extend sincere thanks to all the individuals within CSSP who had supported him. The CSSP lunch meeting received this news with a standing ovation. The phone call to CSSP was carried in worldwide press.

On March 1, 1979, the Committee of Concerned Scientists and the New York Academy of Sciences held a reception in honor of Professor Levich. The Chairman of CSSP was asked to speak at this occasion.

The Carter Administration

On June 1, 1977, the Chairman and several members of CSSP were invited guests to the White House for the swearing-in ceremony for Dr. Frank Press as Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Mr. Richard C. Atkinson as Director of NSF, and Dr. Peter Bourne as Director of the Office of Drug Abuse Policy. Dr. Press of MIT was also a past-President of the American Geophysical Union and past-member of CSSP.

On August 4, 1977, CSSP provided testimony for hearings before the Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, regarding Regulation of Recombinant DNA Research.

On September 20, 1977, the Chairman of CSSP was invited by the Office of International Science of the AAAS, to participate in a Symposium on *Non-Governmental Initiatives Related to U.S. Participation in the 1979 U.N. Conference on Science and Technology for Development*, sponsored by the AAAS, Overseas Development Council, Transnational Network for Appropriate/Alternative Technologies, and the Council for International and Public Affairs. Approximately 80 representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations gathered to discuss how to work together to improve the effectiveness of the upcoming UN conference.

On March 27, 1979, at the request of Dr. Frank Press, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, a copy of the President's message to the Congress on Science and Technology, the most comprehensive statement of the Administration's perspectives and policies on science and technology, was sent to all CSSP members, along with the request for comment.

On April, 1979, I represented CSSP at a special meeting in the White House to hear the President's new energy proposal.

On April 24, 1979, there was a special three-hour briefing in the White House for CSSP on SALT and National Security, Arms Control Implications, and Strategic Force Modernization. Frank Press provided a summary on SALT and the scientific community.

National Medal Of Science Awards

On September 18, 1975 and on October 18, 1976, the CSSP Chairman was invited by Science and Technology Advisor, Dr. H. Guyford Stever, to the White House for Presentations by President Ford and Vice President Rockefeller of the Medals of Science Awards.

On November 22, 1977, the Chairman and several members of CSSP were invited by Science and Technology Advisor, Dr. Frank Press, attended the presentation of the National Medal of Science Awards in the White House by President Jimmy Carter.

CSSP Achieved Credibility

We knew CSSP had arrived the day Dan Greenberg wrote in *Science and Government Report* (January 15, 1975) of CSSP: "Since common interest among such numbers (total membership of more than 500,000) and variety of disciplines is difficult to detect, and more difficult to focus, the Committee is not taken seriously in official Washington, where it has been striving for notice." Ten years later, Dan Greenberg defended this comment by saying, "Well, no organization is taken seriously in official Washington."

Indeed!