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SCIENTISTS AT THE FEDERAL TROUGH

Science, Money, and Politics: Political Triumph and Ethical Erosion. Daniel S. Greenberg, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001. 530 pp., $35.00 (ISBN 0226306348 cloth).

According to the author, Daniel S. Greenberg, "this book is about the politics and finance of science in America from the end of World War II to the turn of the century. It examines and seeks to explain a great and unusual success: the prosperity and autonomy of science, a deliberately nonpolitical enterprise embedded in a political system of rewards for vote gathering and campaign fundraising. Science prospers on government money, though aloof from these activities" (p. 1). Greenberg goes on to claim that scientists have become astute competitors at the trough of government resources in pursuit of growing the enterprise, and in the process science has lost some of its integrity.

Greenberg is a long-time observer of Washington science policy, as a reporter for the *Washington Post,* as the first news editor of *Science,* and as founder of *Science and Government Report.* He wrote an earlier book on science policy, *Politics of Pure Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1999). His latest book is based on his many years of reporting, interviewing, and interacting with the principal players of American science policy.

Throughout the book, Greenberg tells stories and provides anecdotes to make his point that the scientific enterprise is motivated by an insatiable appetite for federal dollars. This enterprise is, in his view, in the habit of creating the perception of impending emergencies or sounding alarms that require an even greater influx of federal money to ameliorate an imminent calamity. These stories are interesting and provide insight into the perspectives of the people involved, policy issues, and policy decisions made within the science agencies, the Congress, and the White House. Greenberg's comments are directed toward federal funding for science, with particular emphasis on biomedical science. He neglects to indicate that, in many fields, federal support for research is very competitive and that many worthy scientists do not receive federal funds or are underfunded. This has certainly been the case in my field.

An interesting story is the account of the supposed shortage of PhD scientists in the mid-1980s. The suggested shortage originated out of a request for a review of scientific and engineering employment from the then National Science Foundation director. The NSF noticed demographic data suggesting that the number of births declined in the 1960s and extrapolated from this information that the number of bachelors' degrees in science and engineering would decrease in the 1980s. This evoked the possibility of an impending PhD shortage, thereby stimulating an increased production of PhD scientists. The projected shortage did not occur, however, and as a consequence, the increased PhD production negatively affected the employment

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prospects of PhD scientists well into the 1990s.

One chapter of the book describes the increased lobbying efforts of universities, illustrating how they work to ensure that some portion of federal dollars goes to their institutions. Earmarking is denounced by most universities; however, most do not turn away the largess of their legislators. How institutions view earmarking depends a great deal on their success with the peer review system used by federal agencies to select science projects. The book also discusses the growing cultivation of congressional benefactors by parts of the scientific community in an effort to increase federal funds for particular areas of science.

In another chapter, Greenberg recounts the only time that scientists have played a significant role in an election. This happened in the presidential campaign of 1964. Often groups of scientists will sign on in support of one candidate or another, this usually being the extent of their activity. In 1964, however, scientists mobilized against Barry Goldwater, which contributed to his ultimate defeat. How and why this mobilization took place, and the impact it had on future political endeavors of the science community, make for a fascinating story. In the following chapter, Greenberg relates how President Nixon eliminated the position of Science Advisor to the President.

Public understanding of science is another issue Greenberg tackles. His premise is that scientists think that the more the public understands about science and science research, the more likely they will agree that increased levels of federal funding for science are necessary. Greenberg's argument is that, even if the public does not understand science research, it is still willing to support federal funding of science, as can be seen throughout the post–World War decades. In this chapter, Greenberg also takes a jab at science journalism for its zeal to sensationalize scientific discoveries, particularly those related to medical discoveries.

Reading Daniel S. Greenberg's book generates mixed emotions: Indignation and enlightenment come to mind. Those working in Washington policy circles will not be surprised by Greenberg's revelations, while those outside the Washington beltway, with jaundiced views of how things work in Washington, will have their perceptions verified.

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