

Instead, OEO fared no worse than most older, less controversial agencies would have under such close scrutiny, and, in one way at least, a good deal better.

The report states that the funds appropriated for poverty programs were modest in relation to the total Federal effort. This is interpreted in Congress as an admission that OEO is underfinanced.

But if the OEO came through alive, it was not without its lacerations. The study attacks the agency for the costly "limited success" of the Job Corps, and urges that the corps be transferred to the Labor Department; President Nixon's recent poverty message made the same recommendation.

The OEO fought back last week with the statement that more than 70 percent of the corps' members have been placed either in jobs, school or military service, and that this is a good showing considering that previously they had been socially unproductive.

The GAO also suggests that the more than \$24 billion annual Federal effort against poverty be run from a centralized command post (probably the office of Presidential Adviser Daniel Moynihan). The OEO share of the current anti-poverty budget is \$1.9 billion; next year it is hoping for \$2.2 billion.

The Community Action Program, one of the cornerstones of the OEO edifice, received mixed notices. The accounting office found that community action had been less effective than it could have been, but recommended that it continue under OEO direction.

If the GAO suggestions are followed, OEO would concentrate its efforts on community action and other specific demonstration programs. Operational programs would still go to old-line agencies.

SST

Go—but wait, again

More than two years ago the word on the U.S. Supersonic Transport was "go—but wait!" (SN: 1/14/67, p. 31). Boeing and General Electric had won the hard-fought and extended competition to be chosen as builders of the 1,800-mile-an-hour plane, but tight money forced construction of the first two prototypes to be postponed indefinitely.

This month the waiting could come to an end. Or, for the same reasons that were invoked two years ago, it could be stretched out again, possibly as long as another two years.

The decision is President Richard Nixon's. He expects to make it by April 15. A key factor in that decision is the recommendation of Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe, which he hopes to make by April 1. In turn,

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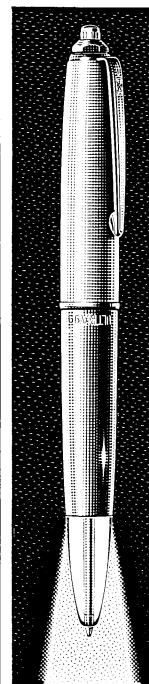
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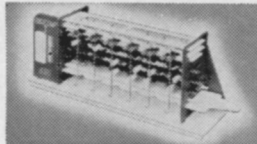
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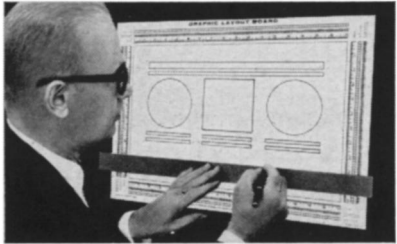
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feeding Volpe's recommendation are a clutter of reports, briefs, claims and counterclaims that have made predicting the future of the SST into a task for a soothsayer.

The airlines are for it, despite the fact that each plane is likely to cost at least \$37 million, and, critics claim, possibly as much as \$48 million. The airline recommendation was made to the Federal Aviation Administration as part of its review of Boeing's new design for the plane (SN: 11/2, p. 440). Both the FAA, which also favors going ahead with prototype construction, and the airlines made their views known to Volpe in mid-February. Another vote believed to have been favorable was that of a technical committee that, under the direction of Dr. Raymond Bisplinghoff, dean of engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, reviewed the plane's potential performance.

Far less certain is the recommendation of an ad hoc committee appointed by President Nixon largely to brief the Administration on a complicated program most of whose directions were set under President Johnson. The ad hoc committee's views were apparently less favorable than those of the FAA and the airlines, but there appears to have been no consensus either to go on or to wait. A chief concern of the pro-waiting forces on the committee is the cost of the aircraft, particularly from the standpoint of whether the Federal Government would have to help with financing during the manufacturing stages. Volpe, however, has been an avowed supporter of the program.

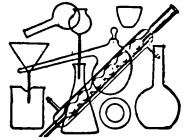
One opponent of beginning prototype construction now is Treasury Secretary David M. Kennedy, whose concern with overall budget problems has caused him to speak of the SST as "one area that it seems to me could be deferred." Undersecretary of the Treasury Paul A. Volcker was a member of the ad hoc committee reporting to Volpe.

Volpe's recommendation to President Nixon will have to have been a strong one if construction is indeed to go ahead. The reason is that President Nixon would have to ask Congress for an additional appropriation of about \$250 million for fiscal 1970 for the plane, not a move he is likely to favor in the first budget of his administration.

A decision to postpone construction would probably be described as a deferment in favor of additional research. Proponents of the plane, however, claim that little additional research can be effectively conducted without the prototypes to work on. "If they put it off," says one industry official, "there'll sure be a lot of high-level thumb-twiddling going on at Boeing."

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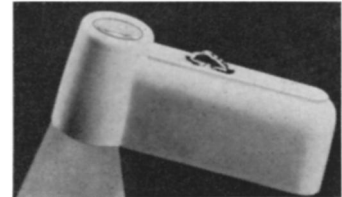
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