Almost one hundred scientists from universities, national laboratories and industry gathered in Washington DC on October 26 and 27 for a budget summit. The summit was called by Frank Press, president of the National Academy of Sciences and MIT Professor, in response to President Reagan's September announcement of additional 12 percent across-the-board reductions in spending for various federal agencies, including many that sponsor scientific research. Press called the summit for the purpose of "sorting fact from rumor," according to Science magazine. Several representatives from Reagan's Administration were present to discuss the proposed cuts, including White House Science Advisor George A. Keyworth and Fred Knedouri of the Office of Management and Budget.

Reagan's representatives told summit participants that there will be less money for research this year and in years to come until the economy begins to improve. Knedouri summarized the Administration's position on the proposed cuts, explaining "The Administration has a radically different attitude toward the budget. We've established [dollar] targets and will not lie passively by and just watch them erode."

Knedouri tried to assure scientists that the "science cuts are not mindless," adding that they are necessary because Congress did not pass all of Reagan's original cuts. Press emphasized the desire that budget cuts be "rational" and "informed." Some scientists present argued for an advisory role for science, while others felt that scientists should participate directly in the budget process. Several participants did not want to accept the cuts since science can contribute to the goals of national security and a strong economy. Many scientists expressed fear that these cuts would discourage young people from starting careers in research.

The scientists' positions were officially presented to the Administration and to Congress in a communique on October 27. The summit concluded that "Because of the important relationships between research, technology and the goals of the Administration's economic program — a sound economy and strong national security — it could be argued that investments in research should be increased, not decreased, in the decades ahead."

The Technology and Culture Seminar at MIT will sponsor a public forum on THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF GENETIC ENGINEERING on AGRICULTURE. Frederick M. Ausubel, Professor of Biology, Harvard University, will speak.

Thursday  Mezzanine Lounge  November 19  Student Center  4:30 PM

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