

# 'Devil's Advocate' Denounces Kennedy's Science Policies

By JOHN TROAN  
Scripps-Howard Science Writer

President Kennedy's science chief today ignored charges that "a small group" of underlings with "little proven competence" have seized control of "a major fraction of Government research policy."

The charges were made by Dr. Philip H. Abelson, self-styled "Devil's Advocate" and editor of one of the nation's most respected science journals, in a talk last night in Houston.

Dr. Abelson contended the Federal Government's "present mechanisms for policy-making with respect to science and technology are badly in need of overhaul.

"Too much power is concentrated in a few overworked people, most of whom are of limited competence," he said.

He argued that such a situation, compounded by Government secrecy, "must inevitably lead to corruption either of the intellect or of the purse."

Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, an electronics engineer, is the President's chief science adviser. He is to return to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology about Feb. 1 and be succeeded by Dr. Donald F. Hornig, Princeton University chemist.

Dr. Wiesner declined comment. But associates said he resented what he regards as an unjustified attack on his staff.

Dr. Abelson, first U. S. scientist to split the atom, now

is head of geophysics at the Carnegie Institution of Washington and edits Science, official journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dr. Abelson likened Dr. Wiesner to a "czar of science" who, since his appointment by President Kennedy almost three years ago, "has accumulated and exercised more visible and invisible power than any scientist in the peacetime history of the country."

Dr. Abelson said there's no way to judge how good a job Dr. Wiesner has done because most of his activity has been cloaked in secrecy. But he indicated he didn't think Dr. Wiesner had done too well.

Dr. Abelson's main attack, however, was directed at the 16 "professional aides" who staff the Office of Science and Technology, a White House agency created last year. As its director, Dr. Wiesner draws \$22,500 a year—his only paid job.

He complained that the staff men "are not a distinguished group" tho they are supposed to be "highly trained specialists." Besides, he said, they have been "throwing their weight around" at other Federal agencies involved in research — "distressing" the agency heads and undermining employe morale.

Dr. Abelson contended these underlings have taken control of "a major fraction of Government research policy" because Dr. Wiesner—"one of the most conscientious, hard-working men in Washington"—has been trying to handle

more problems than any human can.

Dr. Abelson said Dr. Wiesner is not only the President's personal science adviser and director of the Office of Science and Technology but chairman of the 18-man President's Science Advisory Committee, chairman of the Federal Council on Science and Technology, "de facto director" of the Budget Bureau in charge of research and development money, and "Personnel Procurement Officer for Scientific Posts" within the U. S. Government.

Dr. Abelson insisted the job of presidential science adviser "is a big one which merits full-time effort" and thus should be divorced from the Office of Science and Technology. However, President Kennedy has announced Dr. Hornig will hold both jobs.