

*Statement from
OTA director,
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Fiscal Year 1993 was a year of substantial change for OTA. In January 1993, OTA's Director for the last thirteen years was called to become Science Advisor to newly-elected President Clinton and was also appointed Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). During the rest of 1993 a number of additional senior and administrative OTA staff also joined OSTP. Those staff departures along with the retirement of another assistant director resulted in the formation of a new top management team halfway through the fiscal year.

The change in management provided for more flexibility in responding to the legislative branch's priorities for resource economies. In doing so OTA's

policy was to manage for the best value and to try to achieve expected levels of productivity with a less expensive process, primarily, by reducing management overhead. In doing so a major effort has been made to preserve the working units of the agency, the project teams, and to make changes in organization and personnel through reassignment and attrition not through reductions in force. The response to the requirements of our appropriations has been made in a series of steps. These include reduction of OTA's research divisions from three to two, with redistribution of the existing nine programs to the two new divisions. Also the support offices' management by a separate operations manager has been ended, and these offices are now distributed into the research divisions and the Congressional and Public Affairs office. This management change should improve the coordination of administrative and research functions. Further steps for the future have been the subject of major staff planning efforts and involve coalescing of the nine programs to six in response to continuing financial stringency

We are proud that during the time that all this activity has been going on, OTA was able to maintain the unique OTA process, which has served the agency and the Congress so well over the years, and to continue at traditional levels of productivity in generation of reports and information for congressional committees. The hallmarks of OTA's process remain: working on an agenda that flows from committee priorities and reflects, therefore, by definition important national issues; staff commitment to independent research, analysis and responsibility for the results with only focused reliance on contracting outside of OTA; careful search for and attraction of the best national experts and stakeholders as advisors for each assessment; reliance on advisors and the peer review process to monitor and ensure the quality of OTA work; and with the help of our Technology Assessment Board, a staff culture that assigns the highest priority to producing work that is nonpartisan, accurate and complete.

OTA spent considerable time preparing documentation and appearing before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress to explain and

demonstrate how our work for the Congress is accomplished. Although there was some discussion in the Joint Committee directed at a consideration of duplicating some aspects of OTA's Technology Assessment Board for other congressional support agencies, the Committee did not propose any changes for OTA itself. At the same time, however, OTA took steps resulting from an internal analysis to provide greater standardization and uniform quality of reports. These steps included an agency-wide managing editor to provide continuous quality review and suggestions to project teams, a program to make available expert outside consultation on a periodic basis, and a rethinking of how prescriptive or conclusive OTA might or should be in reporting to Congress, among others.

With respect to achieving traditional levels of productivity during the year, OTA released 50 reports, full assessments or background papers—essentially the same number as in fiscal year 1992. And early in the fiscal year, in celebration of our 20th anniversary, OTA sponsored a "Forum on Technology and Governance in the 1990s." This Forum set the stage for OTA's future and focused sharply on five major

areas of importance to the Congress and the Nation: international security, the environment, economic competitiveness, health care and education. Major presentations in these areas were made by Robert McNamara, Gro Brundtland, Laura Tyson, Arnold Relman and Derek Bok respectively, and these presentations were published by OTA in a monograph to recognize the event.

Our reports for the year covered the usual wide range of subject matter, and included a number which might be singled out as particularly of interest and use to Congress and the Nation. "Dismantling the Bomb and Managing the Nuclear Materials" capitalized to some extent on work OTA did looking into cleanup of DOE weapons production facilities. This study warned the Congress that a lot of work remained to be done to design and implement a plan to dismantle nuclear weapons and handle the resulting large quantities of radioactive materials and, in particular, to achieve the understanding and support of the public through a thoughtful and open process which involved as well as educated the public. At the same time OTA issued a study reviewing "Aging Nuclear Power

Plants" which should give the Congress a good sense of what to expect in terms of power plants going offline and some of the particular problems and challenges that lie ahead in managing this very difficult process with which the Nation has had relatively little experience.

OTA completed during 1993 a major study on "Adult Literacy and New Technologies" which raised the salience of this vital issue; OTA emphasized that the problem of illiteracy is of far greater magnitude than most appreciate. OTA's study defined the issue, conservatively estimated prevalence, and delved into implications for competitiveness and ways in which we might address, through new technologies, among others, the difficult task of remediation,

Fiscal year 1993 was the year that health care reform came into its own, and OTA was involved in a number of studies that would prove helpful to congressional committees in tackling the difficult issues in reform plans. Of particular, widespread interest was OTA's report, "An Inconsistent Picture" in which OTA looked at the economic projections made by a number of analysts and stakeholders for the various major categories of health care reform

approaches. The enormous disparities from plan to plan and analysis to analysis in the expenditures, savings, and economic impacts on various sectors of American life proved to be of great interest and generated considerable debate, leading to a request for a follow-on study for delivery in mid-fiscal year 1994. OTA was asked to look at the assumptions that might explain the disparities and the documentation provided by authors of prelections that might allow observers to evaluate the methodology and reliability of those projections,

OTA also released "Multinationals and the National Interest: Playing by Different Rules" in 1993. This report was the first of two analyzing the objectives and policies of multinational corporations and the way they differ from the goals of the countries in which the corporations do business. The first report provided a wealth of descriptive detail and analysis. OTA looked at the treatment of home and foreign multinationals by various major trading partners, Japan, the European Community and the United States primarily, and the way the multinationals behave in various home and foreign environments. The treatment of foreign direct

investment, the implications for trade, for technology transfer and the like were all described. The second report which will contain options for the Congress will appear in fiscal 1994 and together these reports should improve understanding of international trade and U.S. competitiveness.

Many other reports could be highlighted—our work on applications of information technologies, our very topical effort (in view of the major bioethical problems surfacing in early 1994) reviewing federal efforts in biomedical ethics, in the implications of global climate change and many, many more. Altogether OTA is proud of the accomplishments and the assistance to Congress achieved during 1993. We see complex issues continuing to come before the Congress and the American people—issues which will need thoughtful, careful analysis. We look forward to continuing to serve as a shared resource for the Senate and the House, the Majority and the Minority, to help frame issues, to help inform the debate, and to provide useful options for resolution of the issues,

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