

Tentative Draft:

September 21, 1961

A Proposal

By Leo Szilard

It is proposed to set up an organization that would provide fellowships ranging from six months to two years, to men who would wish to devote their full time to the study of problems which are of public interest. There is both an immediate and long-term need for such an organization -- some sort of a National Society of Fellows -- and both are described below.

The immediate need arises from the fact that the men who are working on a full-time basis for the Administration are so much involved in day-to-day decisions that they are not able to think in a relaxed way about the long-term implications of the issues with which they are dealing.

Generally speaking, scientists and scholars who function as advisors to the Administration, and spend on the average just one or two days a week in consultation with the Government, are able to take a more detached view. However, they are not devoting their full time and attention to the study of the problems upon which they are advising the Government and mostly they are continuing their teaching activities; in addition they are frequently also acting as consultants to private corporations, in order to supplement their income.

The immediate objective of the proposed organization would be to offer fellowships, ranging from six months to two years, to scientists and scholars who are concerned with problems lying in the areas of arms control, political settlements, disarmament, and the development of underdeveloped areas, for the purpose of

enabling these men to devote their full time to the study of the problems with which they are concerned.

In addition to providing them with an income, that would leave them free to devote their full time to studies of problems of their choosing, there would also be made available to them office facilities in Washington, D. C. in some setting that would facilitate, their having frequent discussions with each other, as well as with such others as might seek their advice.

The Government could directly benefit from the studies of these "fellows" if, among the holders of such fellowships there were a fair proportion of men, who are acting as consultants to the Administration, and if these fellows were encouraged to continue to make available their advice to the Administration.

Those of the fellows who are at present functioning as advisors to the Administration would become more effective, by accepting such a fellowship, both because they would then be able to devote their full time to their studies and also because, being in Washington, they could follow up their recommendations and see to it that something is done about them. Frequently men who are acting as advisors to the Administration may make excellent recommendations, but because the time that they spend in Washington is limited, they are not able to follow through on their recommendations; thus frequently these recommendations are not carried out.

The National Society of Fellows, here discussed, would be a non-profit corporation. The selection of the fellows could be either left to the board of trustees or else it could be placed in the hands of a special "selection committee."

Among the fellows, some may act as advisors to the Government and others may not. From the long list of those whom the Department of Defense, the Department of State and the Chairman of the President's Science Advisory Committee may be consulting now, or would like to have available for consultation in the future, only a limited number can be awarded a fellowship. These ought to be selected for their independence of thought and their ability to act as gadflies. There is no organ within the Administration where the conscience of the Government may reside and to a certain extent perhaps the National Society of Fellows might function as such an organ-outside of the Government, but not entirely without influence on the formation of governmental policy.

I have discussed this, and related aspects of the organization here proposed, with a number of people in Washington, including Henry Kissinger (Harvard); Jerome Wiesner (The White House); George Kistiakowsky (Harvard); John Ruble (Defense); John McNaughton (Defense); Richard Gardner (State); and Charles Townes (MIT). They were all sympathetic to the general idea and I believe that one could count on their help in the selection of fellows.

It is my belief that the interchange of ideas among the fellows could considerably contribute to the clarification of their thinking and for this reason, the shifting of their residence to Washington, D. C. for the period of their holding a fellowship, ought to be stipulated, at least as a general rule.

The National Society of Fellows will need the services of a Director, but the function of the director should be purely managerial and after the necessary machinery has been set up, it should not take more of his time than about half a day per week. For this reason I would suggest that the director should be one of the fellows or someone else, residing in Washington, who can spare half a day a week for looking after the affairs of the organization.

The amount of the fellowships should be kept flexible. No one should be asked to take a substantial financial loss in accepting a fellowship and in exceptional cases the organization should be willing to offer fellowships ranging up to \$50,000 a year. I estimate the yearly budget to average \$50,000 a year, per fellow, and it would be my advice that the organization ought to go slowly and not aim at more than ten fellowships for the first year. This would mean a budget of less than \$500,000 for the first year.

X  
There might be two or three fellows who would engage in studies within the general area which is of direct interest to the President's Science Advisory Committee. There might be one or two fellows whose primary interest lies in the problem of "~~Commanded~~<sup>and</sup> Control" and who would presumably function as consultants to the Department of Defense. There might be perhaps two or three fellows primarily concerned with the problem of the postwar political settlement, who might act as consultants to the State Department, or the White House, etc., etc.

From a long-term point of view, the fellows might play a very important role by drawing attention to unrecognized problems, and of problems which have been recognized, but <sup>neglected.</sup> ignored.

One or the other of them might undertake to initiate the study of such an <sup>a</sup> unrecognized problem -- outside of the National Society of Fellows.

One or another of the fellows might initiate a study of the question, what forms of democracy might be expected to function in the various underdeveloped areas of the world. The answer might turn out to be quite different for different regions of the world.

One or another of these fellows might initiate a study of what it would take to set up a biological research institute, under conditions where one may hope that an appreciable portion of the research staff would successfully engage in studies of the problem of fertility. One may expect that a research institute of the right sort might, in the course of the next 15 or 20 years, come up with new physiological methods of birth control, suitable for the needs of underdeveloped nations.

Still one or another of the fellows might initiate a study that would produce novel ideas concerning the arbitration of inter-national conflicts and propose some international institution that would be less legal than the World Court and less political than the United Nations.

All the problems, listed above, have been recognized for a good many years, but nothing much was done about them. The

unrecognized  
problems might be still more important but, for obvious reasons,  
I am in no position to list them here.

The End