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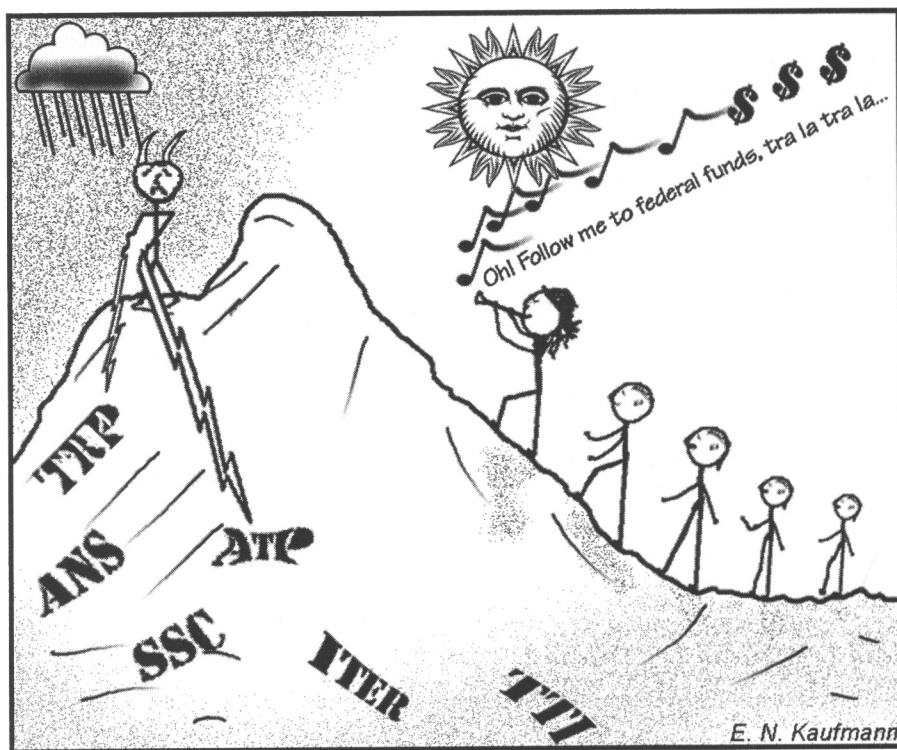
POSTERMINARIES

The Pied Piper of Funding

[Excerpted from "Mountains of Mythical Money" by Dr. I.M. Science Sage (unpublished)]

Fool me once, shame on you! Fool me twice, shame on me! Fool me and all of my colleagues repeatedly over many years, shame on the system! It goes like this. First, forget past debacles. Then, gin up the most comprehensive, state-of-future-art, technically complex project that incurable optimism can imagine. Next, make the rounds with your contagious enthusiasm, hyperbolic claims, and a few friendly lobbyists. Now ride the bandwagon as it hurdles downhill collecting advocates. Watch the credible skeptics remain silent lest they lose friends for their own schemes. A bill authorizing the whole project passes without an adequate companion appropriation. The corner has now been turned. Simultaneous underfunding, stretch-outs, and a whole new meaning for "on schedule and under budget" become the orders of the day. Finally, the passage of time decimates your majority. Supporters defect. Formerly silent critics make noises about zero sum games and the size of the pie. Newcomers want to fix the mistakes of the old-timers they've replaced. And, your dream project is fixed into oblivion.

If you lick your wounds and pursue the grail again, you are presenting symptoms familiar in medical circles. Such cyclical self-defeating behavior is normally diagnosed as an obsessive compulsive disorder. Unfortunately their is no FA (or Fundees Anonymous) organization yet founded to support this particular affliction. Two traditional criticisms of this diagnosis are expected. Some will say this syndrome does not exist. Classic denial! Others



will blame this phenomenon on someone else like the agencies, the Congress, the public's fickleness and generally poor understanding of our high purpose, or the lack of courage and staying power of those who voted our way in the beginning. Classic denial!

Still others will make pronouncements to the effect that "the era of the big science project is past and we must lower our expectations accordingly." When this depressing forecast comes from those in a field that has just lost its

own pet project, we can equate it to the sour grapes of the backside of denial, i.e., anger. Would we could deny the kernels of unwelcome truth poking through the noise of this one. Perhaps it's time to take the cure? On the other hand, if we could only enlist all the domestic and international potential partners who are similarly afflicted in one grand chapter of FA, just think of the clout we could put behind the next megaproject.

E.N. KAUFMANN