

Government and High-Tech Industry Representatives Debate U.S. Technology Policy at BRIE Summit

Organizers of the 1993 Technology Summit are gratified with their efforts to foster an exchange of views on U.S. technology policy between government and high-tech industry representatives. The Summit was organized by the University of California's Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy (BRIE) and the UC-Berkeley Extension. Official endorsements came from MRS and 16 other professional organizations.

The Summit was held November 4-5, on the eve of NAFTA, and the presence of the press and anti-NAFTA demonstrators added an air of spectacle to the event. Many speakers referred to NAFTA, most expressing their support.

Participants agreed that the conference represented the inauguration of a new relationship between commercial technology industries and the federal government. According to BRIE's post-Summit report, both sides showed "an obvious willingness to work together to define the appropriate agenda, to detail and execute it, and even to be held accountable for measurable results and to a timetable." To reinforce the idea of better communications, Department of Commerce (DOC) Secretary Ronald H. Brown even gave out his e-mail address. The report finds it especially significant that participants agreed to continue the dialogue through several fora to be established between

industry and government.

Following brief welcoming statements by BRIE Co-Director Michael Borrus, by John L. Heilbron, vice chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, and by DOC Secretary Brown, Vice President Gore addressed the Summit via live satellite. He unveiled the Administration's report on technology policy, *Technology for Economic Growth*. Brown then reiterated the Administration's themes in his keynote address.

Subsequent speakers included 25 other senior Administration officials, although DOC representation was dominant, with Secretary Brown, Deputy Secretary David J. Barram, Under Secretary for Technology Mary L. Good, and NIST Director Arati Prabhakar all participating. Speaking for industry were nearly 50 CEOs from U.S. high-tech companies. Approximately 600 members of the high-tech community attended the event.

Sessions on the first day examined the Administration's new commercial technology priorities, its high-tech trade strategy, the continuing commercial impact of defense spending, and the National Information Infrastructure (NII). John Gage, director of the Science Office, Sun Microsystems, put on a real-time NII technology demonstration using Xerox LiveBoards—large, interactive, white boardlike screens that display information simultaneously linked across networks. Discussion of the NII raised complex issues involving access, standards and security.

The second day explored how the goals of economic growth and a clean environment can be reconciled, and examined the needs of different high-tech industries in breakout sessions with audience participation. The seven breakout sessions focused on developing new civilian aerospace technologies, breakthrough drugs and biomedical technologies, and new electronics technology; on sustaining domestic manufacturing; on building a domestic flat panel display industry; on achieving leadership in advanced transportation industries; and on maintaining leadership in software.

BRIE's post-Summit analysis characterizes the conference as follows:

"The Summit pointed out the potential tensions evident between industry's technology priorities and American society's domestic needs—for example between the pursuit of trade access abroad and the need for job creation at home, or between the desire to push NII technology forward fast and the need to ensure its universal usefulness for the least technically sophisticated and poorest citizens. But the Summit emphasized that such tensions could be creatively resolved through public-private cooperation to create win-win scenarios: The pursuit of access abroad could be anchored with reinvestment and job creation at home; the NII could be moved forward by experimenting with ways to involve local communities and engage the disenfranchised."

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