

operates. Although his dissatisfaction was not sufficient to make him veto the bill, which increased NIH's funds from \$294 to \$400 million, he did indicate that he had reservations about the wisdom of a 36 percent increase in funds for a single year. His first concern was that the large increase should "lower the quality of the projects supported by increasing the flow of grant applications more rapidly than the procedures for their careful appraisal can be effectively adapted." He directed the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Surgeon General to take appropriate steps to assure themselves that any new research projects be of "high priority and great promise." The President's reservations and his directives to the officials of the department turned the spotlight squarely on the procedures of evaluation that now exist in NIH. Are they adequate now? Will they be changed or expanded?

The NIH grant evaluation process, with its commentary on individual grant requests by study sections, rating of them by advisory councils, and approval by the Surgeon General of as many of the highest-rated projects as the money allows, has been in operation since 1946 when it was devised by C. J. Van Slyke, now Deputy Director of the Institutes. In the opinion of NIH spokesmen, the system has informally been doing the job that the President formally directed the officials of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to do in his statement when he signed the appropriations bill. The effect of the growing appropriations for NIH, spokesmen say, is that the Surgeon General's office will be able to go lower in the stack of grant requests. But, because of the very large number of the grant applications and the stringency of the review process, NIH officials feel, standards will not suffer and the new money will go to research projects that will add significantly to the public health.

Congress Leaves Conservation Issues for Next Year

Members of the 86th Congress brought their first session to an adjournment on 15 September and left most of the important conservation legislative issues for the second session that will begin in January. The National Wildlife Federation reports that, although the session did not result in any outstanding conservation accomplishments, several measures were brought along to points

where final action may be expected early next year.

Among the major conservation bills under consideration, that strengthening the Federal Water Pollution Control Act probably made the most progress. This measure to protect streams from raw sewage pollution (H.R. 3610) was sponsored by Representative John A. Blatnik (Minn.). It passed the House, 255 to 143, and won approval in the Senate by a 61-to-27 margin. The House version of the bill, however, would increase the program of grants for the construction of municipal sewage treatment works from \$50 million to \$100 million annually for 10 years, while the Senate voted only \$80 million. Differences in the measures were being considered in a Senate-House conference committee at adjournment time, and the compromise version probably will be among the first sent to the President next year.

Soil Bank and Pesticide Awards

After lengthy discussion, Congress granted \$375 million—the same amount as last year—for the Conservation Reserve Soil Bank program, a program for reducing surplus agricultural production. Under the Soil Bank, farmers lease land to the Federal Government, which uses it for wildlife preserves or other purposes. Last year 23 million acres were retired under this plan at a cost of \$375 million. If this land had been planted, it would have cost the government \$600 million just to store the surplus produced. An even greater controversy over the Soil Bank can be expected in the next session, for the act authorizing the program expires at the end of the 1960 calendar year and must be extended if the plan is to continue. Measures to extend the authorization have been introduced but have not yet received serious consideration.

Congress also approved S. 1575 authorizing the expansion of the Fish and Wildlife Service research program into the effects of pesticides on fish and wildlife. The measure, which contains a maximum authorization of \$2,565,000 per year, was signed by the President on 16 September. Efforts by conservationists to knock out the \$2.4 million Department of Agriculture appropriation for fire ant "eradication" failed, however. This program has a serious detrimental effect on fish and wildlife, and other organisms.

Other Measures Held Over

One of the few major conservation measures not involved in budgetary

considerations—the Wilderness Bill to preserve public lands (S. 1123)—was included in the legislation held over until the second session. Although it has not yet been voted on by committees in either the Senate or the House, much groundwork was laid toward working objections out of the bill and in holding extensive field hearings. Action by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular affairs is expected early next year.

Among other measures to be held over into the second session are: S. 812, to establish a Youth Conservation Corps, which has passed the Senate; S. 1262, to authorize large impoundment fisheries research, which has passed the Senate; H.R. 2565, the Sikes Bill to authorize fish and game programs on federal military reservations, which has been reported by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee; H.R. 7045, to establish the huge Arctic Wildlife Range in Alaska, also reported by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee; and S. 2086, to establish a wildlife disease laboratory, which has been reported from the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee.

National Medical Library Interlibrary Loan Program

It is now 2 years since the new interlibrary loan policy of the National Library of Medicine went into effect. During fiscal year 1959 the National Library of Medicine filled over 6000 interlibrary loan requests each month, and there are many indications that the volume of business will continue in a steady rise.

Two-thirds of all interlibrary loan requests received at the National Library are now being completed within 5 working days. A major objective of the program has been attained in that the percentage of publications "unavailable by reason of being already on loan" has dropped from 33 percent in 1957 to 18 percent in 1958 and to 12 percent in 1959.

The proportion of interlibrary loans being furnished to foreign libraries (one request out of every seven) has remained about the same this year as last. The number of such loans amounted to 10,000 in 1959, leading to speculation as to whether the various national facilities are being fully exploited.

Copies of a revision of the National Library of Medicine's interlibrary loan rules may be obtained on request.