

Senate Passes Appropriation Bill for the Atomic Energy Commission

The Senate passed an appropriation bill for the Atomic Energy Commission last week calling for \$2.7 billion for fiscal 1961. It added roughly \$17 million to the figure allowed by the House. This increase will be subject to a possible reduction when Senate and House conferees meet to work out the final version, although in any case the changes will amount to less than 1 percent of the AEC's appropriation.

The increase includes \$13 million for the Antarctic power reactors for which the AEC, under pressure from the Atomic Energy Committee, solicited bids a month or so ago, on the strength of assurances that money to pay for them would be added to the appropriation bill in the Senate (*Science*, 24 June).

Nuclear Aircraft

The Senate bill also removed a restriction the House had placed on spending for the controversial nuclear aircraft project. The AEC would like to spend about \$78 million on this project, \$15 million more than the House would have allowed. The nuclear aircraft project has become one of the most controversial scientific programs sponsored by the government. It is enthusiastically supported by the majority of the Atomic Energy Committee and by some elements in the Air Force and the AEC. Others, impressed by the apparent lack of results after an investment of nearly a billion dollars, are quick to call it a national scandal. One of the stories going around Washington, perhaps apocryphal, concerns a high-level meeting of scientists and administrators called to see how things were coming along. A leading expert on atomic reactors was present but had nothing to say until late in the afternoon, just as the meeting was breaking up. "But gentlemen," he asked, "how are you going to keep the plane from melting?" The meeting then continued another three hours without resolving this question.

AEC Chairman John McCone told the Appropriations Committee he thought the nuclear plane project was worth while. He said the limitation on spending should be eliminated because stretching the project out would only serve to make it just so much more expensive in the long run. The project, if it succeeds, promises to be extremely valuable. It will enable airplanes to stay aloft indefinitely, a military break-

through which the project supporters believe would be as important as the development of the nuclear submarine, with its ability to cruise indefinitely under water.

Other Programs

Larger but less controversial items in the AEC budget are for raw materials, nuclear materials (refined from raw materials), weapons, and the reactor development program. Each is budgeted at roughly half a billion dollars. The budget also includes about \$165 million for physical research and about \$55 million for biological and medical research.

Food and Drug Administration Tightens Regulations on Drugs

The Food and Drug Administration has proposed a general tightening of its regulations governing the brochures distributed by the drug companies with prescription medicines. The general effect of the proposals, which will become effective sometime this fall, is to require the manufacturer to include detailed information, including that on possible adverse side-effects, with almost all material sent by mail or distributed by the manufacturer's detail men when they call on doctors. Until now the manufacturer has been required only to include a notice offering to send doctors the detailed information on request.

The move is partly a reaction to Kefauver committee's criticism of the industry and of FDA's policing efforts. But the FDA began drafting the new regulations even before the Kefauver investigation got under way. According to a top FDA official, the investigation speeded the move, but the FDA had begun working on the proposed new regulations before the investigation began, in response to a changing attitude within the medical profession.

Attitude of the Profession

The FDA official said that the attitude of the profession, until fairly recently, was that the doctor did not need, and indeed would resent, any government action that might imply that a doctor needed the help of the government to assure that he learned all he should know before prescribing a new drug. It was the policy of the FDA, the official said, to respect this feeling on the part of the profession. But in

recent years, he said, the rapidly increasing number of new drugs introduced each year, accompanied by a heavy increase in promotional activity by the manufacturers, has led to a growing feeling in the profession that too many doctors, swamped by promotion and visits from detail men, were getting and relying on a one-sided picture of the unfamiliar drugs that the companies were recommending. The FDA has responded to this change in attitude by moving ahead with the new and tighter regulations.

In another move, again prompted in part by the Kefauver investigation, the FDA has proposed a procedure requiring the inspection of manufacturing procedures before a new drug may be placed on the market. The drug companies, like almost any other group, are less than delighted at these prospects of increased federal regulation, but judging by their initial reaction, they appear to regard the intent of the new regulations as reasonable. The net effect of the two moves is expected to go at least part way in achieving the objective of the drug manufacturer's licensing bill proposed by the Kefauver committee.

Pauling Hearing Postponed

Linus Pauling's reappearance before the Senate Internal Security Committee, originally scheduled for last week, has been postponed. Pauling had asked for a delay until November, but the committee ordered him to appear on 15 September. At that time he will have to risk a contempt citation if he maintains his refusal to supply the committee with the names of scientists who helped him gather signatures for a 1958 petition against nuclear testing (*Science*, 1 July).

Barring further postponements, there will be a showdown on 15 September unless a federal court upholds a petition Pauling has filed for an injunction against the committee's demand that he supply the names. If the court does not issue the injunction, which appears likely, and if Pauling and the committee both hold to their positions, he will presumably be cited for contempt. The courts will then have to decide whether the committee was justified in citing Pauling for contempt. (Whether the courts uphold Pauling's present request for an injunction will not necessarily indicate whether the contempt citation, if it comes, will be upheld.)—H.M.