NASA's sudden switch is thought to stem not from any new developments in its relations with its R&D contractors, but rather from the passing away of the Eisenhower Administration and its replacement by an administration which is far less business-oriented.

Loevinger, who was expressing the traditional Justice Department view, urged that NASA's title-holding provisions be enacted into a uniform policy for all government agencies. The Defense Department's satisfaction with its present arrangement dictates strongly against any such blanket policy, but the increasing dominance of federal money in the nation's R&D effort is providing powerful pressure for some spreading of the opportunities to exploit the commercial possibilities of government-financed inventions—D.S.G.

Project West Ford: Failure Believed Due to Mechanical Malfunction; New Attempt Has Not Been Scheduled

The cause of failure in Project West Ford is believed to have been a mechanical malfunction which resulted in the release of the needle package without a spinning motion. The conclusion is a tentative one, which the Lincoln Laboratory, director of the project, is withholding pending completion of a number of studies. Persons associated with the project report, however, that the mechanical malfunction theory appears to be the most likely.

West Ford, which was first attempted last October, was intended to place in orbit a ring of 350 million fine copper wires for experiments in jam-proof communications. The wires were embedded in a 6- by 17-inch napthalene cylinder which was to receive a spinning motion as it was released from the rocket that carried it aloft. As the naphthalene sublimated in space, the wires were expected to come free and be dispersed by the force of the spin. Repeated radar searches, however, have failed to turn up any indication of a band of wires; on several occasions a number of relatively large objects have been contacted in the expected path of the needle package, suggesting that the package may have disintegrated but that, because of the lack of spin, the pieces are remaining close together.

When another attempt will be made is at present uncertain. The initial announcement of the West Ford project drew strong objections from radio and optical astronomers who claimed that the needle belt would interfere with their observations. These fears were discounted by a number of review groups, and the launching was carried out after a panel of the President's Science Advisory committee concluded that the experiment would produce no adverse effects. There is considerable reluctance, however, to make a second attempt until there is reasonable assurance that the needles of the first package will not suddenly blossom forth.—D.S.G.

Overhead Allowance: HEW Renews Effort To Raise 15-Percent Limit

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is making another attempt this year to raise the overhead allowance on its research grants.

The present maximum, set at 15 percent in HEW's appropriation act, has long been a sore point with university administrators. They argue that the allowance, which is supposed to cover the costs outside of salaries, supplies, and equipment, is inadequate; in effect, they charge, universities accepting government research projects are expected to provide a subsidy.

HEW, which would ideally like to have a flexible allowance rule that would permit it to cover all indirect costs, is modestly seeking an increase to 20 percent. It can anticipate a friendly reception in the Senate, where the Appropriations Committee last year went along with a request for a 100-percent allowance on overhead costs. The modesty of the request is due to the anticipation of difficulty in the House, where Congressman Fogarty, of Rhode Island, chairman of the HEW Appropriations Subcommittee, has adamantly opposed raising the allowance.

Fogarty, who has led the way in pressing money upon the National Institutes of Health, which handles the bulk of HEW's grant funds, has fixed upon the overhead issue as a point for economizing in research expenditures. He has remained unimpressed with surveys that place overhead costs generally in excess of 30 percent; he has noted that no institutions are declining federal research grants because of the overhead limitation—an observation which HEW officials say appears to be correct, but which takes no account of the fact that institutions often are forced to deprive some departments in order to accept grants for others.

The Administration, faced with the task of reconciling its budget-balancing desires with assurances that it would seek to raise the allowance, has compromised. The recently submitted budget provides $5.4 million to pay for an increase to 20 percent, but the change would not go into effect until the latter half of the coming fiscal year, 1 January to 30 June 1963.—D.S.G.

Bears: The Federal Aviation Agency Says They Play No Role in Crash Studies

The Federal Aviation Agency gave assurances last week that it has no intention of using bears in its research on crash injuries. The assurances were contained in a letter to the New York *Times* from James L. Goddard, the civil air surgeon of the FAA. Several persons had expressed their concern to the agency since it was erroneously reported that the FAA considered bears to be anatomically suitable substitutes for humans in crash studies, and would so employ them.

The original report, as carried in the press, stated: "Because of their ability to stand upright and other general physical similarities with humans," a number of bears would be strapped into fuselages, which would then be subjected to various stresses, including sharp impacts. The report added that it was anticipated that some of the bears would be killed or so seriously injured that they would have to be put to death.

Goddard wrote that he was pleased to have an opportunity to correct the news story. He said the error arose from an interview between a reporter and an FAA researcher.

The researcher was asked, Goddard explained, "whether laboratory animals such as mice could be used in conducting experiments on human tolerance in aircraft accidents.

"To clarify the point, the scientist pointed out that anatomical differences would render mice valueless, and if an animal were used it would have to be one of a more comparable size, shape and one which walked upright, such as a bear; an analogy which apparently led to the misinterpretation."

Goddard said his statement covers present as well as future FAA policy toward bears.—D.S.G.