

current year and \$130 million in fiscal 1968.

The space agency expects to send men on a return trip to the moon surface during the coming fiscal year and thereby achieve the national goal which it began pursuing 8 years ago. But NASA's budgetary star continues to wane. The new budget requests \$3.9 billion for NASA next year, about the same amount that is likely to be spent in the current year and drastically less than the \$5 billion budget of fiscal 1967. The decline in the NASA budget reflects the completion of expensive construction projects and the disappearance from the budget of large sums for the purchase of costly Apollo program hardware, and also the absence of work on any major new post-Apollo manned programs. A larger share of NASA funds next year will be tagged for research than for development. NASA's space sciences budget would rise from \$289 million this year to \$351 million next year. And attention will be shifting to such events as the 1971 and 1973 Mars Mariner unmanned flights, the 1973 Venus-Mercury flight, and the proposed Planetary Explorer series later in the decade. NASA's bleak budgetary prospects in the early 1970's has troubled many space program partisans. Last week, for example, NASA's deputy administrator George Mueller said the budget as it stands "will put us out of business in 1971 and 1972." The question of NASA's future is likely to be a high priority one for President Nixon.

A conspicuous lacuna in the budget is the omission of funds for the supersonic transport (SST) project. The Boeing company recently submitted its SST proposal and the government will presumably decide this spring on what could be a nine-figure-line item in the budget.

Administration officials see increased spending on new military programs, for submarines and aircraft and, notably, for procurement of antiballistic missile hardware. But the Defense Department's spending on research is expected to rise only slightly and not to surpass the 1966 level. Funds for Defense's Themis program in the universities are supposed to remain level at about \$27 million.

The Atomic Energy Commission's research programs would get some \$16 million more under the proposed budget, raising the total to \$437 million. The AEC continues to handle the finan-

NSF Budget: Binding Up the Wounds

President Johnson's proposed budget makes an obvious attempt to heal some of the wounds inflicted on the National Science Foundation during the recent spending squeeze. Much to the surprise of the Foundation's friends, the outgoing President, in a last-minute move, is said to have personally ordered a big boost in the NSF budget request. The President requested appropriations of \$500 million* for NSF for fiscal 1970, compared with only \$400 million granted NSF for fiscal 1969, the current year.

Foundation officials seem pleased with the size of the request, but there is no guarantee that Congress will look any more kindly on the NSF request this year than last. Pessimists might note that the fiscal 1969 budget also requested \$500 million for NSF, but Congress reduced the figure by an amazing 20 percent. And even if the Foundation gets the full \$500 million requested, which seems highly unlikely, the boost would only bring NSF back up to roughly the level of fiscal 1968.

The new appropriations requested, when combined with various recoveries and unobligated balances carried forward from previous years, would give NSF a total obligational authority (money available to commit) of \$520.3 million* in fiscal 1970. This would be the highest total in the history of NSF, and would represent a substantial increase from the \$435 million available in fiscal 1969.

Most of the increase would go to scientific research support and institutional support, thus providing some relief for the hard-pressed universities that seem to have borne the brunt of the current year's budget crunch. Support of research projects would be boosted to \$195 million, up \$17.7 million from the current year. Most of this boost, namely \$10 million, is allocated for interdisciplinary research, both basic and applied, relevant to problems of our society and the modern environment. This is virtually the only significant new departure in a spending program that NSF officials characterize otherwise as "pretty much a standstill budget," designed to bind up wounds.

Other substantial increases are budgeted for the International Biological Program (\$5 million requested, up from \$0.5 million this year); the National Sea Grant program (\$10 million, up from \$6 million); the Ocean Sediment Coring Program (\$6.5 million, up from \$2.5 million); Computing Activities in Education and Research (\$22 million, up from \$17 million); and university science development (\$30 million, up from \$20 million). The increase programmed for university development will be applied mainly to renewal grants for existing programs and will permit only two, or possibly three, new grants. About \$2 million has been allocated for a new oceanographic ship, and about \$3 million for resurfacing the radio astronomy instrument at Arecibo, Puerto Rico. Support for science education is budgeted at approximately the same level. There would be a slight increase in fellowships and traineeships, from 7438 to 7610.

Though NSF suffered a sharp cut in appropriations (new money available to commit) in fiscal 1969, the factor which caused NSF the most grief was a ceiling imposed on expenditures (the amount of money that could actually be spent in fiscal 1969 no matter when it was committed). At this point it is not known whether there will be another expenditure ceiling in fiscal 1970, but NSF officials are predicting that Congress, which required the ceilings in fiscal 1969, will take similar action next year. If ceilings are not imposed, the budget request for NSF envisions expenditures of \$500 million, up from \$480 million this year.—P.M.B.

* Includes \$3 million in excess foreign currencies; NSF had no separate foreign currency appropriation in fiscal 1969.