

ations sessions are closed, but, according to sources on Capitol Hill, the subcommittee, chaired by Representative Daniel J. Flood (D-Pa.), heard NIH testimony with interest and, for the most part, sympathetically.

Any critical appraisal of Marston's debut before the Appropriations subcommittee is probably beside the point this year. The grimmer predictions these days are that NIH and other research agencies will have to work with less funds in fiscal 1970 than they did this year. Last year, NIH, while it negotiated reductions averaging about 15 percent on most grants, was not as hard hit as other agencies. NIH strategy, however, was designed to fit a 1-year emergency. The emergency has not ended, and it is now conceded that across-the-board percentage cuts will not serve. The only practical course is likely to be the ending of some programs, both intramural and extramural. The carrying out of the first serious retrenchment in NIH history will be the first major test for Marston's leadership.

In the longer run, Marston and NIH seem to be facing a competitive future. Federal dollars are flowing into the health budget in increasing quantities, but the amounts needed to finance Medicare and Medicaid, regional health programs, and health manpower training programs are enormous, and the public demand for federal spending on health services could overwhelm the reasoned case for medical research.

NIH partisans seem to be assuming that filling the HEW assistant secretary's post would mean that a strong advocate of biomedical research would take the field. Maybe it would. But it is conceivable that, sooner or later the top federal policy-making official could have a list of priorities that put the production of medical manpower or the equalizing of medical services at the top of the list and biomedical research far down. The era when NIH operated under sanctuary conditions in Congress and when federal biomedical policy was virtually made by the panels which advise on the awarding of research grants seems to be ending. For better or worse, federal policy-making on health matters and therefore on biomedical research is being politicized. And this, as well as the Vietnam war budget squeeze, has abruptly brought to an end the decade of remarkable growth in biomedical research which already is being remembered with nostalgia as the good old days at NIH.

—JOHN WALSH

## NEWS IN BRIEF

● **HEW CRITICIZED FOR AIR POLLUTION R&D:** A House Government Operations Committee report has charged that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) is lagging in developing new techniques to combat air pollution. The report, reviewed by the Conservation and Natural Resources Subcommittee, chaired by Representative Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.), says that research and development on air pollution abatement, particularly on the reduction of sulfur oxide pollutants, has been largely ineffective and wasteful. The report was particularly critical of the lack of coordination in interdepartmental research efforts. "Federal air pollution research and development: An interim report on sulfur oxides pollution abatement R&D" may be obtained at no cost from the Conservation and Natural Resources Subcommittee office, Room B-349-C, Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C.

● **VENUS-MERCURY MISSION:** Scientists interested in participating in mission planning and in the development of imaging and celestial mechanics instruments for the U.S. Venus-Mercury mission scheduled for 1973 are encouraged to submit proposals to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Scientists are also invited to attend a preproposal briefing scheduled for 16 April in Washington, D.C. Inquiries may be sent to Stephen E. Dwornik, Code SL, Office of Space Science and Applications, NASA, Washington, D.C. Scientists may apply as individuals or in teams.

● **UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAM:** With the help of industrialist-financier Howard Hughes, the University of Nevada is establishing an experimental interdisciplinary health sciences program which would permit students to obtain degrees in 15 allied health fields. George T. Smith, acting dean of the new program, told *Science* the university is coordinating a 2-year basic medical school curriculum with graduate courses in health sciences specialties, such as medical engineering, nursing, psychology, and sociology. Smith says an agreement has been reached with the University of California School of

Medicine at Davis to enroll Nevada University medical students for the third and fourth years of medical training. The Nevada University Health Sciences program is expected to have about 700 students enrolled in some phase of health sciences by 1971. Howard Hughes has contributed \$6 million to the Health Sciences Program.

● **ENGINEERING ENROLLMENT DECLINES:** A survey of 270 schools of engineering indicates that full-time graduate student enrollment in engineering in 1968 in these schools is down 16 percent from 1967. The survey, conducted by the Engineering Manpower Commission of the Engineers Joint Council, shows the total number of full-time graduate students in engineering declined from 49,610 in 1967 to 41,530 in 1968. The Commission says that graduate school enrollments in engineering have risen steadily since World War II at a rate of about 12 percent per year and that the 1968 reduction represents a first and "dramatic decline." Engineering Manpower Commission officials attribute the decline to a change last year in the draft regulations, which has had the effect of cutting full-time graduate student deferments, except in the medical sciences.

● **MESON FACILITY USERS ORGANIZE:** A users group has been organized for outside scientists interested in using the new \$55-million Meson Physics Facility expected to be operating by mid-1972 at Los Alamos. The Los Alamos Meson Physics Facility (LAMPF) accelerator will provide pimesons for research in medium-energy physics; it is expected to have about 50 percent of its beam time available to outside scientists. The LAMPF Users Group will serve as a communications link between the various outside users and the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. The Users Group, which has chosen Harry Palevsky of Brookhaven National Laboratory as temporary chairman, expects that the facility's beam time may be utilized by as many as 200 to 300 outside experimenters at any given time. Interested users are encouraged to contact Louis Rosen, LAMPF Administrator, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, P.O. Box 1663, Los Alamos, New Mexico.