

tend, however, that it would be illogical to create a separate ocean agency if Interior is to retain primary responsibility for protecting and developing the nation's resources. They argue that such resource problems as water pollution, estuary protection, mining, oil drilling, and recreation—all current responsibilities of Interior—do not stop at the water's edge. They insist that the agency charged with protecting the environment must have in-house capability on both land and water. Moreover, they contend that ocean programs could get stronger congressional support and attract more competent personnel if they were operated by a large and experienced department. Interior already is the largest civilian ocean agency, with a budget of about \$78 million for sea-related activities in the current fiscal year.

But supporters of NOAA fear that ocean programs might get even less attention if they were submerged in a big department and left to compete for the Secretary's favor. They complain that Interior is too "land-oriented." Representative Lennon contended in an interview that Interior had often neglected its oceanography mission until it saw the current opportunity for expansion. "Why have they suddenly become interested in this field?" Lennon asked. "Because they want to increase their prestige and their responsibility. They want to be the biggest department, and they certainly don't want to give up any functions they now have."

Ironically, it was the Secretary of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel, who provided the strongest ammunition for NOAA advocates during the Senate hearings. Hickel admitted under questioning that he had not read the Stratton Commission report. He also rankled some oceanography supporters by referring to Project Tektite, the Caribbean undersea-living experiment, as "Tektite." The Secretary's performance later drew this scathing attack from Hollings in his Senate speech of 5 March.

He is the Secretary who soon after assuming his office "recognized a need within the department to forge ahead with imaginative new marine programs." Accordingly, he added the words "marine affairs" to his Assistant Fish Secretary and hired three female secretaries. . . . He is the Secretary who opposed NOAA because you couldn't get competent personnel in an independent agency, yet he wasn't competent enough to get his Fisheries budget through the Bureau of the Budget without a 14 per cent cut this year. . . . The Department's [total] marine sciences budget was cut \$2.5 million. The

Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in his department has been politicized to the point that one of our witnesses stated that the Bureau's morale is at an all-time low. . . . In spite of [Interior's] failure to bring [the Santa Barbara oil spill] under control, this is the department that continues to license oil drilling in the same area. . . .

Hickel was not alone in his failure to read the Stratton Commission's massive report, "Our Nation and the Sea." As Hollings' hearings proceeded, the same admission was made by the Secretary of the Navy, John H. Chafee; the Secretary of Transportation, John Volpe; and the President's science adviser, Lee A. DuBridge. It was a stunning reminder to oceanography boosters that their most elementary problem is getting someone to listen. Is the Administration interested? Its spokesmen say that it is, that the NOAA proposal is under intense study, that substantive recommendations will be made soon.

Yet the full Council on Marine Resources, a coordinating group headed by Vice President Agnew and including the head of each department with ocean-related duties, has not met since last May—and has met only twice in the course of this Administration. The council's work has been carried on by the staff and by a second-level committee. Moreover, the Administration did not request funds to continue the council's existence past its 30 June expiration date until 12 March—7 days after Hollings had complained that the council was going to be scrapped. The council's highly regarded executive secretary, Edward Wenk, resigned late last year to take a post at the University of Washington and has not been replaced.

Although the Stratton Commission report is almost 15 months old, the Administration has taken only one formal action on it—on 19 October, when the council announced support of five proposals: (i) cooperation with the states in creating Coastal Zone Management programs; (ii) establishment of more Coastal Zone laboratories; (iii) Great Lakes restoration projects; (iv) U.S. participation in the International Decade of Ocean Exploration, beginning this year; and (v) Arctic environmental research.

Congressional supporters of the NOAA bill had hoped the Administration would announce more marine science plans in the President's message of 10 February on the environment. But the President merely noted, in what seemed like almost an afterthought, the

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **OIL SPILL INQUIRY:** Charging that Chevron Oil Company had "knowingly and willfully" violated offshore oil drilling regulations, Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel has recommended a grand jury investigation of the company's operations. This recommendation was prompted by an investigation begun after a month-long oil and gas fire was finally extinguished 10 March off the coast of Louisiana. The federal law which Hickel wants invoked provides for fines of up to \$2000 per day for violations and a maximum of 6 months' imprisonment for individuals found guilty. These provisions have not been invoked previously, although the act dates from 1953.

● **CANADA RENOUNCES BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS:** In a government statement submitted by the Canadian delegate to the 25-nation disarmament conference, Canada said that it does not possess any biological weapons and does not intend to develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, or use such weapons at any time. Canada also promised that it would produce and use chemical weapons only if they were used against Canada or its allies.

● **SACCHARIN STUDY:** The Food and Drug Administration has contracted with the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council for an investigation of possible health hazards from saccharin. The investigation is expected to take 2 months. The FDA placed high priority on a quick study after a University of Wisconsin researcher, Dr. George T. Bryan, produced cancer in the bladders of mice with implants of saccharin pellets. The chemical, which was discovered almost a century ago, is 300 times sweeter than sugar and is a common additive in diet foods and drinks. An earlier investigation resulted in a ban on cyclamates, another artificial sweetener.

● **NEW DIVISION AT OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY:** A new Ecological Sciences Division has been formed at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to place special emphasis on understanding the balances of nature and the dangers of pollution. Ecological studies had previously been a part of the Health Physics Division. Stanley I. Auerbach, head of ecological studies, will direct the new division.