in fact life without the walls was not qualitatively different. What had been the guardhouse at the town's main gate metamorphosed easily into a restaurant; the old gray laboratory buildings downtown were eventually torn down and replaced by new laboratories on mesas to the south, separated from the town by one or more of the great canyons that split the plateau; and the security posters ("Idle talk can cause tragedy—are your lips sealed?") that used to adorn even the entrance to the Safeway gave way to more conventional decor. Nonetheless, there was, and remains, some unspoken agreement, a silent consensus, not to dwell upon the weapons work that progressed steadily out on the south mesas or upon the fact that this peaceful community existed for one reason—to conduct research on the most potent armaments man has ever devised.

To all appearances, Los Alamos is now a more cosmopolitan place than it was during the 1950's, connected to the outside world by more frequent visitors and by a well-used airport crowded with private planes. With the sale of homes and commercial properties in the main townsite to private individuals, beginning in 1963, and the transfer of administrative authority to local government in 1967, the town has undergone a substantial facelifting.

The town has grown from its wartime population of several thousand to its present size of 12,000 in the original townsite, plus an additional 4,000 persons who live in the "suburb" of White Rock on a neighboring mesa. Although the town is now beginning to grow older and to develop a substantial retired population, school-age children still account for about a third of the population.

Nearly one out of every four residents works at the laboratory, including both husband and wife in many families. The laboratory thus dominates the town economically and socially, although less now than in the past, when housing and all municipal services were controlled by the AEC and hence, effectively, by the laboratory director. Among the laboratory's 4000 employees are 1700 professionals, including 1100 with advanced degrees, giving the town an educational makeup comparable to that of a university town, which it in some ways resembles.

Among its concerns are those of any community—education, drugs, crime—but Los Alamos is far better off economically than most company towns that must survive on a limited tax base. Under a 10-year contract with the county government, the AEC subsidizes some community services, providing roughly the difference between what the county can raise and what it must spend to provide services comparable to those previously furnished by the AEC. Payments under the contract, now in its fifth year, amounted last year to about $1 million, or 37 percent of the county's general governmental expenditures. Efforts to attract light industry that might provide additional tax revenues have never worked out, apparently largely

Briefing

Science Shuffle

The recent reshuffling of key officials for the second-term Nixon Administration could signal not only changed leadership for the next 4 years, but a serious try at major government reorganization with implications for science and technology.

As of early this week, informed sources were saying that two key science agencies could be "where the action is" in the probable forthcoming science shuffle: the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In addition, some White House offices, notably the Office of Science and Technology, the National Aeronautics and Space Council, and the Council on Environmental Quality could be affected by the President's statement last week that the "largest" personnel cuts would be made in the White House staff, which had "grown like Topsy."

The White House is likely to suggest that some AEC activities be transferred, notably the civilian nuclear power and nonnuclear sources of energy programs, perhaps including Plowshare, to some other organization with overall responsibility for a national energy program. The Administration is expected to unveil such a policy within the next few months, and it is now rumored that lead agency responsbility for its execution will go to the Department of the Interior, or an expanded version of it, called the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—not to the AEC.

Also possible to move under Interior's or DNR's purview is NOAA, which, after considerable infighting, was placed in the Department of Commerce upon its establishment in 1970. This likelihood is consistent with past Presidential reorganization schemes, all of which have moved NOAA away from Commerce and combined it with other environmental research units such as the U.S. Geological Survey.

The Office of Science and Technology, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the National Aeronautics and Space Council all could be affected by forthcoming White House cuts, which look as though they will be of the big federal agencies. The new, streamlined Nixon White House looks as though it will have a drastically reduced staff reporting through fewer channels to key aides such as John Erlichmann and George Shultz. Hence, specialty groups such as the Office of Science and Technology are likely to suffer personnel cuts. As to the fates of science adviser Edward E. David, Jr., and technology opportunities chief William M. Magruder, so far, there are only rumors.

As the Camp David strategist continues to shake up the lineup for the second term, it might come as some consolation to government scientists that past Nixon reorganization schemes (they all must be passed, in some form or other, by Congress) have all had a strong, three-pronged role for science and technology. Under the various versions of the DNR have been clumped environmental, geophysical, and energy research; under various departments of human resources, the efforts in health, occupational safety, and education; under the department of economic affairs are materials research industrial processes standards, and innovation encouragement and technical information dispersal. In the February 1972 plan outlined by the Office of Management and Budget, for example, the proposed DNR included an assistant secretary for research and development. At present, Interior has no such high-ranking science officer. Federal science will be quite differently administered by the time all this is over.—D.S.