

organization—are talking optimistically about making progress toward an ERDA bill by the end of the year. Congressional enthusiasm over ERDA, however, is not universal. Some, including Representative Mike McCormack (D-Wash.), the chairman of the science and astronautics subcommittee on energy, are frankly skeptical that the new agency could provide the kind of “focused leadership” for energy research that Nixon said was urgently needed. McCormack told *Science* that he thinks an energy agency built around AEC and a fragment of the Interior Department represents a “completely inadequate and chaotic” conception that overlooks the skills and facilities of a number of other R & D agencies.

In the ERDA issue as well, Henry Jackson, as the Senate’s prevailing power on energy policy, plays a kingpin role. (Besides being chairman of the Interior Committee, he is a member of the Government Operations Committee and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.) His House counterpart is Representative Chet Holifield, (D-Calif.), chairman of government operations, a dominant figure on the JCAE, and a man determined to keep the AEC more or less intact.

Largely in deference to Holifield and the AEC, the White House earlier this year abandoned its original plan to dismantle the AEC, put nuclear weapons development in the Defense Department, and lodge the rest of the agency in a mammoth new Department of Energy and Natural Resources—the latter to be built around the present Interior Department. When this idea miscarried, the White House proposed ERDA as an independent, companion agency to the DENR (*Science*, 13 July). Under this plan, ERDA would consist of the AEC plus Interior’s Office of Coal Research, minus the five-member commission itself and the AEC’s relatively small regulatory arm; these would form a new, nuclear regulatory agency. The Administration bill said nothing about weapons, although they take up half the AEC’s \$2 billion budget; by implication, AEC’s military programs would remain in ERDA.

Holifield appeared happy with this arrangement, but Jackson vacillated. First he seemed to support ERDA, then, in mid-September, he reversed field and contended that energy R & D belonged in a single resource agency, the DENR. There the matter has remained deadlocked. In a concession that the White

House hoped would break the impasse, Nixon asked in his 7 November message that the House and Senate concentrate on ERDA first, and to delay further discussion of DENR for now.

This move seems to be working only half way. Holifield is urging his committee to complete action on an ERDA bill by Christmas. But an aide to Jackson forecast a “dim” outlook for Senate passage in that short a time, and added that the Senator does not want to split discussions of energy reorganization into “bits and pieces.” Jackson is pressing instead for passage of his own, \$20 billion, 10 year energy R & D plan, which he introduced last March.

In any event, a host of fundamental policy issues remains unsettled:

- What, for example, would be the relation between ERDA and the proposed regulatory agency, the Nuclear Energy Commission?

- Do nuclear weapons programs belong in an agency whose main mission is “clean energy” R & D?

- Would ERDA answer to Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, to White House energy chief John Love, or directly to the President?

- Could an agency built around the AEC make effective use of the National Bureau of Standards, the National Science Foundation, and the space agency?

- Does it make sense to put research and resource policy in two separate and rival agencies?

The skeptics, McCormack among them, see the White House as trying to stampede Congress into accepting a reorganization plan that, in calmer circumstances, might not stand on its own merits. Some influential members seem willing to run, and some do not.

—ROBERT GILLETTE

New Leadership at NCAR

Racked by a succession of crises and 10 months of uncertainty, the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) at Boulder, Colorado, may now be over the worst of its troubles. The laboratory’s board of trustees, known as the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) has appointed a new president, who will take up his duties this month. He is Francis P. Bretherton, professor of earth and planetary sciences at Johns Hopkins University. Bretherton replaces Walter Orr Roberts, who several months ago expressed a desire to retire.

The appointment of Bretherton has occasioned some surprise at NCAR because the new president of UCAR was expected to be an elder statesman type with some experience of the Washington scene. Bretherton, aged 38, is an alumnus of Cambridge University and has held teaching appointments in this country since 1967. A distinguished fluid dynamicist, he is still an active scientist and has accrued no great administrative experience.

Among the problems Bretherton will face are low morale, doubts about the quality of some of the science at NCAR, and an apparent resolve on the part of NCAR’s major patron, the National Science Foundation (NSF), not to increase NCAR’s budget until some of the difficulties are ironed out (see *Science*, 5 October 1973). Asked about his preconditions for taking the job, Bretherton says he “has the authority to make any changes that are necessary.” His primary thrust will be to improve the scientific quality of the programs. “This inevitably means some reshuffling will have to go on, but I haven’t made up my mind what this is going to be,” he says. Bretherton is favorably impressed with the present quality of science at NCAR and says he is convinced the problems are soluble.

A man with a major role in Bretherton’s appointment is Thomas F. Malone of Butler University, Indianapolis, who is chairman of UCAR and was head of the search committee for a new president. Malone says that top NSF officials reassured him that they were not going to “pull the plug out” on NCAR and that their positive commitment to the NCAR concept would continue.—N.W.