by so prominent a Republican on behalf of a Democratic Administration will stand a good chance of ratification.

Another key appointment was that of Warnke, who was the arms control community's first choice for the job, to the job of ACDA director and chief U.S. negotiator for SALT. Warnke apparently was offered the job well before the inauguration and, according to one source, "agonized for 2 weeks" about whether to take the job, and then said no. After the inauguration, however, he reconsidered and said yes.

The Warnke appointment is considered a strong one because Warnke, who served in the Defense Department during the Johnson years, as general counsel and as assistant secretary for international strategic affairs, is also well remembered from that period for having been an early dove on the Vietnam war. Since then, while in private law practice, Warnke has written and spoken about the need for "restraint" in the arms race. By making Warnke both ACDA director and chief SALT negotiator, the Carter Administration is believed to be planning to strengthen that agency. When the SALT negotiations began in the early 1970's, the ACDA director of that time, Gerard C. Smith, was given the job of chief negotiator. But the duties were split later by the Nixon Administration, in a move that was widely interpreted as a weakening of the ACDA director's powers, and hence of the agency itself.

Also in his first week, President Carter made a bold start toward a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty—a goal long sought by scientists and arms controllers. In his first press interview as President, Carter followed up on a major campaign pledge by saying, "I would like to proceed quickly and aggressively with a comprehensive test ban. I am in favor of eliminating the testing of all nuclear devices, instantly and completely."

It was a bold, headline-making statement—announcing the resurrection of a goal that has eluded American presidents since the late 1950's. But it left several key ambiguities—one of which was whether Carter would seek a ban only on nuclear weapons "testing"—which would include weapons tests but not peaceful nuclear explosions (PNE's).

The Soviets have a large PNE program for earth moving, ore fracturing, and gas extraction, to which they are very politically attached, and persuading them to abandon it has often been described as a difficult goal. At week's end, Carter spokesmen had not clarified whether indeed the Administration wanted a total ban on both nuclear weapons tests and PNE's.

Another ambiguity was the fate of a pair of much-criticized treaties (*Science*, 18 June 1976) negotiated with the Soviet Union by the Ford Administration that limit nuclear weapons tests and PNE explosions to 150 kilotons in yield. The treaties have been opposed by the arms control community for setting too high a limit on yields, and for serving to delay the cause of a comprehensive or zero-kiloton ban. The treaties have been a source of embarrassment to the U.S.

Alligator Protections Loosened

The population of the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) has increased severalfold since the species was classified as "endangered" in 1967. Now, the Fish and Wildlife Service, responding to reports of increasing "human-alligator conflicts" in the South, has issued a ruling reclassifying the animals as "threatened" in Florida and coastal areas of four other southern states.

As endangered species, alligators may only be taken (killed) for scientific purposes or to enhance the population. With the animals reclassified as threatened, state officials will be allowed to engage in "limited, lethal removal" where this is thought necessary to protect human lives. The ruling affects about 570,000 of the total estimated population of 734,384 inhabiting the alligator's natural range. Most of these live in Florida; the rest are in coastal areas of Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas.

The move has been made in response to pressure from southern states that has built up over the past 2 years, which, according to a spokesman from the Fish and Wildlife Service, has been intensified by pressure from dealers in crocodilian hides.

Environmentalists, according to Lewis Regenstein of The Fund for Animals, see the reclassification as totally unwarranted. Regenstein says it amounts to "basically reestablishing the commercial alligator hide market." States can auction off the hides and, once hides are reintroduced into trade, he says, poachers will be on the move and it will be impossible to ensure that the animals are taken legally. He also says the alligators aren't moving in on the people, rather the reverse pertains—alligator habitats are being chewed away by waterfront housing developments. In the words of a Fish and Wildlife official, "their backyard used to be the alligator's front yard." The wildlife official adds that a study in Florida showed a significant correlation between areas of calls to the state about alligator nuisances and areas plied by known poachers—which might suggest that complaints have been trumped up to get the state in a dither.

State officials maintain, however, that illegal activities can be effectively controlled, just as they are supposed to be in Louisiana where there is a 1-month alligator hunting season. They say the alligators are getting out of hand, and that simply picking up intruders and putting them back in the swamp will not solve the problem. According to an official of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fisheries Commission, the population in that state has risen by 30 percent a year to an estimated 600,000. He says the commission received 10,000 complaints last year and had to send people out to relocate 3,000 alligators. He says ditching, diking, and canal-building in the southern part of the state have created a sort of alligator highway system which enables them to show up wherever there is water. Residents of waterfront communities help small alligators overcome their fear of people by feeding them marshmallows and such. "It is hard for people to look down the road" and foresee that a 3- to 4-foot alligator is going to turn into something bigger—perhaps 11 feet—and not so cute, he says. It is only the so-called "tame" alligators that attack people.

So far, casualties have not been great—eight injuries and one fatality in Florida in the past 3 years, according to an official from that state. However, he says, some people are getting "sort of hysterical" about the problem. In recent years the alligator has come to be looked on as a symbol of conservation in the state. Now, it is feared, unless restrictions are loosened, the animals will lose their public support and people will start taking the law into their own hands.—C.H.