

conservative approach because no useful studies of the impact of lowering serum cholesterol through diet are available. Brian McMahon, an epidemiologist at Harvard University, expressed the consensus of the group in saying that individuals who already have low serum cholesterol levels should be counseled against further reductions with a low-fat diet.

Most health officials counsel reductions to about 200 milligrams, reasoning that most coronary heart disease risk is eliminated at that concentration. But a minority has urged an even lower target, arguing that cholesterol levels are much lower in countries such as Japan, where coronary disease is much less common. "The Japanese data have been thrown at us for years," Levy said. "But there will be less opposition now to recommending 200 milligrams instead of 150 milligrams."—**R. Jeffrey Smith**

Koop Nomination Jeopardized

If C. Everett Koop is not confirmed as U.S. Surgeon General within the next month or so, his name might be withdrawn and a new candidate selected for the post, according to Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker. Schweiker made the remark at a reporters' breakfast.

Koop's Senate confirmation hearing has been stalled because the House has not yet passed a waiver that would allow the 65-year-old Philadelphia pediatric surgeon to take office. The law currently limits the surgeon general's age to 64. Koop's outspoken stance against abortion, homosexuality, and women's rights has stirred up considerable controversy on Capitol Hill. His lack of experience in public health has also been challenged (*Science*, 24 April, p. 422).

According to an aide to Assistant Secretary of Health Edward Brandt, no one else has been considered for surgeon general. Even if Koop is not confirmed, he could still be retained in his current post as deputy assistant secretary of health, which is a political appointment and carries fewer responsibilities.—**Marjorie Sun**

Columbia Looks Good, Second Launch Announced

NASA last week announced a target date of 30 September 1981 for the second launch of the space shuttle Columbia. The flight was originally scheduled for 18 October, but engineers evaluating Columbia at the Kennedy Spaceflight Center have found so few problems overall that they have dropped several previously



planned tests. Most of the "anomalous conditions" are very minor, they say. Some that are more significant:

- One thermal protection tile that came off completely and about a dozen that lost pieces. In addition there were 303 nicks and gouges in the tiles. The probable causes were frost, ice, and perhaps insulation falling from the external fuel tank during launch. At least 100 tiles will have to be replaced.

- Some very localized damage to the aluminum skin of the orbiter, corresponding to areas where tiles were

damaged and reentry heat seeped through. The damage can easily be repaired, say the engineers. Moreover, in many parts of the orbiter, temperatures were lower than expected.

- A malfunctioning Development Flight Instrumentation recorder, which turned out to have a loose washer in the mechanism. Much of the aerodynamic data was lost during reentry; however, information on turbulent air flow, a crucial measure of the smoothness of the orbiter's tiled surface, has been recovered from data transmitted to the ground after Columbia emerged from blackout.

- Failure of one of the three auxiliary power units shortly before reentry. These units power the hydraulic system, which in turn controls the elevons, rudder, flaps, landing gear, and the steering of the main engines. Two units are required for reentry; all three for launch. The cause of the failure is still undetermined.

- Failure of the zero-gravity toilet. It has been returned to the factory.

—**M. Mitchell Waldrop**

White House Nominates New Science Adviser

The White House has named George A. Keyworth as science adviser to the President and director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Keyworth emerged as a candidate for the post only recently (see *Science*, 22 May).

A 41-year old physicist from the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, Keyworth's selection for the government's top science policy post represents a sharp break with tradition. Previous science advisers have mostly been drawn from the scientific establishment. Keyworth is not widely known outside his field.

Keyworth's nomination has been strongly supported by Harold Agnew, Edward Teller, and others. He has also been warmly endorsed by Senator Harrison Schmitt (R-N.M.), chairman of the Senate science and space subcommittee. The nomination is subject to Senate confirmation.

—**Collin Norman**