

prize, the other two projects have been set aside for further review. The Tosco project has one major weakness in that one of the partners—Exxon—has indicated it may go ahead with the venture even if the government backs out. The Great Plains project has a problem, too. Both Stockman and the new chairman of the Synthetic Fuels Corporation, Edward Noble, are said to be deeply opposed to the scheme because they think that there is no reason to subsidize synthetic gas production at a time when companies seem to be finding more and more gas in natural deposits. Reagan may reconsider these projects in early August, but a White House spokesman says no one expects a decision soon.

—*Elliot Marshall*

Legislators Clear Way for Koop Nomination

Congress has approved a measure that clears the way for C. Everett Koop to be formally nominated as Surgeon General, but his confirmation by the Senate is still uncertain.

Koop's nomination, which has been stalled for several months by adept parliamentary maneuvering by House Democrats, was freed when legislators agreed to a reconciliation bill amendment sponsored by Democrat Henry Waxman of California. The measure is both honey and vinegar to the Republicans. Much to the Republicans' delight, the Waxman measure eliminates the mandatory retirement age of 64 for members of the Public Health Service Corps. Koop is 65. On the other hand, Waxman's bill stipulates a new requirement that the surgeon general have "specialized training and significant experience in public health programs," a standard that critics of Koop say he is unable to meet.

Given that the Labor and Human Resources Committee, which will hold confirmation hearings, has a Republican majority, Koop's approval seems assured. However, one of the committee's Republicans, Lowell P. Weicker of Connecticut, has sided with Democrats on some health issues and could provide a tie vote. Another committee

Republican who has voted with the Democrats on some measures is Robert T. Stafford, but a staff aide says that the Vermont senator believes that the President should be free to appoint whom he wishes. "There's no reason to believe he'd vote against Koop," the aide says.

Even if Koop is confirmed, the Waxman requirement of public health experience does provide the committee Democrats with the wherewithal to grill Koop, who has been keeping a low profile as deputy assistant secretary of health.

As part of the same reconciliation bill, the health conferees also agreed to restore \$35 million to research training grants. The Administration had originally sought to cut the program by \$50 million to \$147 million while Democrats pushed for \$193 million. The legislators in conference settled on a figure of \$182 million for fiscal 1982 which will cover institutional allowances—though at a lower pay level than last year—despite the Administration's desire to eliminate allowances. The previous year's budget was \$207 million.—*Marjorie Sun*

Search Begins for New NIH Chief

A team of top officials at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is narrowing a list of about 115 names of suggested candidates to replace outgoing National Institute of Health (NIH) director Donald S. Fredrickson. A pared-down list is to go before HHS Secretary Richard Schweiker by mid-August and an appointment might be made by Labor Day.

There has been some nervousness in the biomedical community that someone with less than eminent qualifications might be appointed. Critics have charged that the Administration's candidate for Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, has insufficient public health experience for the job. But the search committee and the criteria from which the members are working appear to preclude an appointment of a person who falls short of the biomedical establishment's expectations.

For starters, the members of the

search team come from the mainstream of the biomedical community. They are assistant secretary of health Edward Brandt, Jr., former University of Texas vice chancellor for health; Food and Drug Administration commissioner Arthur Hayes, former professor of pharmacology at Pennsylvania State University; and assistant secretary for planning and evaluation Robert J. Rubin, former assistant dean at Tufts Medical School.

According to the standards the committee is using, the candidate must have a record of excellence in research, leadership in the biomedical community, experience to administer a complex organization and talent for choosing capable colleagues and inspiring them. The White House agrees with the criteria and is maintaining a hands-off approach until Schweiker makes his recommendations to the White House, according to Denis Prager, an associate director in the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Ultimately, the NIH appointment must be made by the President and then approved by the Senate.

One significant problem in attracting candidates is that many scientists outside government may be unwilling to take the considerable salary cut that comes with the NIH directorship, according to John Sherman, a vice president of the Association of American Medical Colleges. At most, the post pays about \$70,000 a year. Many medical school deans and high-level scientists in industry hold salaries ranging from \$90,000 to \$150,000, Sherman estimated.

With several top-level positions at NIH vacant, the biomedical community has also been uneasy about the attack earlier this summer on the National Cancer Institute and its director Vincent DeVita by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). Prager went out of his way to emphasize that DeVita "has the full support of the Administration." He said that there seems to be "some misunderstanding" that DeVita needs to be reappointed by the new Administration. When a person is already a presidential appointment, "it's not necessary for the White House to send up a notice that a person is reappointed."

"There's a broad consensus that DeVita is doing a superb job," Prager said. "He's a pleasure to work with."—*Marjorie Sun*