

Brown Loses Bid to Head Space Subcommittee

In a surprise move, Representative George Brown (D-Calif.) announced last month that he was stepping down as chairman of the House agriculture subcommittee on research in order to claim the chairmanship of a science and technology subcommittee dealing with space policy. The move was widely interpreted as an effort to secure a more influential position on issues involving military use of space, an area in which he has taken a keen interest. On 7 February, however, members of the Science and Technology Committee passed over Brown for the space subcommittee chairmanship and instead elected Representative Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) to the post. Brown is thus left without a chairmanship.

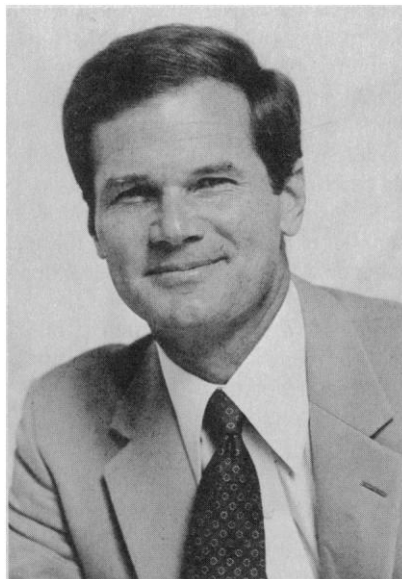
Nelson, whose district includes the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, is said to have campaigned hard for the post and gained support from many freshman members of the committee. He defeated Brown by a vote of 14 to 10. The chairmanship was open because Representative Harold Volkmer (D-Mo.), who headed the panel last year, has moved over to replace Albert Gore, Jr. (D-Tenn.), as chairman of the investigations and oversight subcommittee. Gore was elected to the Senate last year.

Brown, who has been influential in science policy matters for most of his two decades in Congress, is thus left without a major power base. Had he stayed in the agriculture subcommittee post, he would have been well placed to influence reforms in the nation's pesticide law, which is up for renewal this year. Had he gained the space subcommittee chairmanship, he would have been in a prime position to oversee the space station.

The agriculture subcommittee chairmanship vacated by Brown has gone to Representative Berkley Bedell (D-Iowa), who in the past has sided with Brown on many research and environmental issues.

One key committee concerned with science issues, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, has not yet completed its reorganization. However, the chairman of the health subcommittee will continue to be Rep-

resentative Henry Waxman (D-Calif.). Representative Timothy Wirth (D-Colo.) will remain as chairman of the telecommunications subcommittee.



Representative Nelson

Defeated George Brown for the subcommittee chairmanship by a vote of 14 to 10.

Both those panels will have almost twice as many members as last year. The chairmanship of the subcommittee on energy conservation and power, which was vacated by Richard Ottinger, who retired from Congress last year, is expected to go to Representative Edward Markey (D-Mass.). Markey, like Ottinger, is expected to give a good deal of attention to nuclear proliferation.—COLIN NORMAN

Herrington Confirmed as Energy Secretary

In the parlance of one of his backers, John S. Herrington clearly brings a "fresh and unbiased perspective" to his new job as Secretary of Energy. Herrington, who was confirmed by a vote of 93-1 on 6 February, is an attorney who by his own admission has little or no experience in energy and nuclear weapons matters, the two principal concerns of his department.

Herrington comes to his new job from the White House, where he served as director of personnel and masterminded a reorganization that favorably impressed the President. At a recent hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Com-

mittee, he indicated that his primary assignment is to determine whether his new department should be similarly reorganized, or perhaps dismantled, as Reagan has previously promised. "I have a totally open mind on this issue," he said.

Although Herrington insisted he will be a "full-time Secretary, not a caretaker" while this study is under way, he confessed that he will perforce come to substantive discussions somewhat cold. "Are you familiar with our fusion energy program?" asked Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), his toughest interrogator. "Sir, I am not," Herrington said. "I am aware of the program, but I am far below the technical level to understand the difference between fusion and fission and various nuclear terms." What mixture of energy resources should the United States have by the year 2000? Bumpers asked. "I think that speculation is beyond the scope of my knowledge," Herrington said, promising that he would come back to the committee for answers after his confirmation.

Few of Herrington's remarks were commitments. His principal theme was that "we need to use energy wisely and we need strong and efficient energy-producing industries." He said that he favors completion of the nuclear power plants now under construction, the "reasonable" application of health and safety regulations, and an "activist" role for the government in the creation of alternative sources of energy over the long run. "I am a believer in conservation," he told the committee. Nuclear weapons production should remain under civilian control, and "technical-type scientific people" should not be subjected to political loyalty tests, he added.

Most committee members praised him effusively, despite their vehement opposition to any destruction of the department. Senator Pete Wilson (R-Calif.) said that Herrington, who has also been an assistant secretary of the navy for manpower and reserve affairs, was "superbly prepared"; Senator John Warner (R-Va.) said, "I am certain he will serve with excellence"; and Senator Bennett Johnston (D-La.) said that Herrington had "the background and . . . ought to have the skills to do this job very well."

The lone negative vote was cast by Senator William Proxmire (D-Wis.),