NEWS & NOTES

• **SABIN RETIRES**: Albert B. Sabin, president of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, for the past 3 years, retired from that post on 1 January because of ill health. Best known for his discovery of the oral polio vaccine, Sabin will become a Fogarty Scholar at the National Institutes of Health this year. Israel Dostrovsky, vice president of the institute, will serve as acting director and chief executive officer.

• **ENERGY BOARD AT INTERIOR**: The Interior Department, in the expectation that it will one day be part of a new Department of Natural Resources (DNR), has set up an Energy Board whose function eventually will be to coordinate energy policies in all branches of the federal government. Executive director of the board is Kenneth L. Lay, formerly an economist in the Federal Power Commission, who has been appointed Deputy Under Secretary of the Interior for Energy. The board is chaired by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton and consists of four or five assistant secretaries, who will meet periodically to coordinate the energy concerns of the Interior. The board will eventually be fleshed out with advisers, staff, and a separate budget and will work with other government agencies. Ultimately, it will be the focal point for energy development and research policies within the DNR. It would "interface" with the natural resources group of the Office of Science and Technology, a group whose main function is to advise executive decision-makers on how science and technology can be brought to bear on the development of energy resources.

• **CALL FOR REPEAL OF ABORTION LAWS**: The American Public Health Association (APHA) has urged the repeal of restrictive state abortion laws. In the new "Recommended Program Guide for Abortion Services," APHA stresses that even currently revised laws requiring state residency or prior approval by hospital committees or doctors pose serious barriers to access to abortion services. The abortion guide was prepared by APHA's Task Force on Family Planning Methods, Council on Population, and was approved by the executive board in November.

to set scientific priorities through the work of interagency groups fell flat. Then in 1950, Truman's budget director William T. Golden undertook a one-man study of federal science. He recommended creation of the post of science adviser to the President and of a science advisory committee reporting to the President. This led to the formation of a Science Advisory Committee in the Office of Defense Mobilization (SAC-ODM). Chairman of the committee was Oliver Buckley of Bell Labs, but Buckley declined to serve as science adviser. Lee A. DuBridge, a member of the committee and later its chairman, who was President Nixon's first science adviser, recalls that the SAC dealt primarily with planning for the recruitment of scientific talent in the event of a national emergency, and only toward the end of Truman's years in office did the committee begin to take initiative in offering advice on current problems.

Mechanisms for planning and control of military research during the Truman period were primitive. The unification of the armed services occurred in the late 1940's, but competition in the areas of research, development, and procurement of new and increasingly costly weapons systems persisted among the services.

In other areas, such as the development and conservation of natural resources, some groundbreaking legislation was enacted. The first federal legislation against water pollution, for example, was passed during Truman's Administration. But environmental problems had a low political priority in those days. In the field of social legislation Truman was sharply rebuffed on proposals for federal aid to education, housing, and national health insurance.

The eulogies of Truman have emphasized his forthrightness in accepting responsibility for his actions. It was partly this that gave his presidency a personal quality, which diminished subsequently as the work of the Executive grew in scale and complexity and the President grew steadily more insulated. Truman operated with a relatively small staff; West Virginia Congressman Ken Hechler (D), who served as a White House aide toward the end of the Truman years, recalls that Truman himself regularly presided over morning staff meetings. Everyone had a clear idea of what everyone else was doing, says Hechler, and there was no apparent friction over prerogatives.

Truman's reading of history and service in the Senate had given him a clear idea of the powers of the presidency and the nature of the Constitution. He believed in delegating responsibility to his Cabinet officers, but often directed White House staff members to see that Administration policies were being carried out. When he believed that a constitutional issue was involved as in the case of the dismissal of General MacArthur, he could act without regard to probable political costs.

Presidential reputations ride a roller coaster, and rating Truman is more than usually difficult. In recent years a school of revisionist historians have blamed Truman and his advisers for actions which exacerbated, perhaps even created, the Cold War. Use of the atomic bomb is seen to have been directed less at defeating Japan than at warning the Soviet Union. And the system of economic and military aid and regional alliances constructed in the Truman years to meet perceived threats, first from the Soviet Union and later from Communist China, is viewed as having narrowed postwar diplomacy into a dangerous armed rivalry between superpowers.

The decision to use the atomic bomb probably was fraught with more profound moral and political consequences than any other decision made by an American president. Truman made that decision within 3 months after taking office; he had been told nothing about the bomb project while he was Vice President. As far as the public record shows, Truman never had doubts about his decision. His reasoning is described in this excerpt from his memoirs:

> It was their [his advisers] recommendation that the bomb be used against the enemy as soon as it could be done. They recommended further that it should be used without specific warning and against a target that would clearly show its devastating strength. I had realized, of course, that an atomic bomb explosion would inflict damage and casualties beyond imagination. On the other hand, the scientific advisers of the committee reported, "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use." It was their conclusion that no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target.
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> The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisers to the President recommended its use, and when