points at which to apply political pressure.

The proposal is also sure to attract opposition from interest groups who like things fine the way they are. For example, various influential health lobbies are likely to resist a move to strip the National Institutes of Health away from the Department of Health and Human Services and put it into a department with more of an industrial focus.

Then there is the problem of congressional jurisdictions. Any reorganization plan that would require committees to give up some jurisdiction always prompts some bloody turf battles, and this plan is likely to be no different. One compromise would be to structure the proposal in such a way that the various components of the new department would continue to report to their current committees. But that would not help advance the cause of better coordination and planning.

The key to the proposal's success will be just how strongly Reagan himself is willing to push it. In the past, new departments have only been established when the President has made them a top priority and is prepared to lobby personally for them. In this case, the proposal will reach the President with the endorsement of a commission composed of prominent industrialists, but it will have a tough time competing against the deficit for his attention.—**COLIN NORMAN**

The Knives Are Out for OSTP

Senior White House officials are pushing for its elimination, but science adviser Keyworth says he has Reagan's support

"It's an indication of the times," says George A. Keyworth, II. "These are hardball days."

Keyworth is referring to a continuing effort by some top White House aides to abolish the office that he directs, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), thereby putting him out of a job. This effort, which has been rumored in Washington for several weeks, took on additional momentum when Keyworth's future was discussed at a recent meeting of the senior White House advisers who are presently formulating next year's federal budget. According to a knowledgeable White House official—not in Keyworth's office—many of the participants agreed that the science adviser's office should indeed be eliminated, but postponed any final decision.

In response to an inquiry, Keyworth acknowledges that he has enemies on the White House staff and in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) who would like to see OSTP dismantled and its responsibilities dispersed. Talk of such a move has been loud enough for him to seek assurances of support from Edwin Meese III, the President's counsellor, "on a couple of occasions" in recent months. Finally, on the morning of 10 December, Keyworth thought it necessary to approach Reagan himself. At a private meeting in the Oval Office, Keyworth says, Reagan assured him that "any rumors about my termination are ridiculous and unfounded; that he approves of my work; and that he very much wants me to continue to serve as his science adviser."

The animosity toward Keyworth at other levels of the White House appears to be rooted in both personal and institutional conflicts. Various officials note, for example, that he does not get along well with either Richard Darman, the deputy chief of the White House staff, or Craig Fuller, the President's chief assistant for Cabinet affairs. Both are clearly formidable opponents. Darman was recently characterized by *The Wall Street Journal* as "the White House's Power Broker," because he supervises presidential speechwriting, coordinates legislative strategy, chairs the budget working group, and controls the flow of paper into the Oval Office. Unlike Keyworth and Meese, who generally hew to conservative ideology, Darman and Fuller are considered political pragmatists. Together, they are said to have presided over a sharp decline in Keyworth's influence. Neither could be reached by *Science* for comment.

Although Keyworth refuses to talk about his personal relations with other White House officials, he acknowledges that some of his opinions have stirred considerable controversy within the federal bureaucracy. "One who does nothing makes no enemies," he says proudly. At least two major controversies come quickly to mind, he says. One was stirred by his early criticism of the space station promoted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and endorsed by the President last December. "I was concerned for years that it lacked definition, and I was skeptical of some of the claims being made about the processing of materials in space," Keyworth says. "These tough questions clearly were not welcomed by everyone."

But others within the Administration say that it was not just Keyworth's early criticism of the space station that ruffled feathers but also his recent quixotic endorsement of a manned lunar base or a visit to Mars as the most sensible reason for the station. Keyworth acknowledges that "I did indeed make provocative statements, and we have had an interesting debate ever since." He also explains that "I am, like most people of the sputnik generation, a space nut."

Keyworth adds that a second major controversy was caused by his unflagging enthusiasm for the President's proposal to defend the nation against a ballistic missile attack, popularly known as the "Star Wars" plan. "As you know, I've been a vocal supporter since [23 March] the day the speech was given," he says. "There are people in this Administration who wish that I'd been struck by a car on that evening." The opposition comes from those who believe either that the program is a political liability or that it "should be used as an entry fee in the arms control talks," Keyworth says. He firmly opposes any negotiating trade-offs involving Star Wars and routinely displays more interest in the program than senior Pentagon officials.

Some White House officials also seem to hold Keyworth responsible for the awkward publicity that ensued earlier this year when a White House scientific task force recommended prompt action to limit acid rain. The panel that presented this unwelcome advice was conceived by Keyworth and reported to him. "He personally presided over this catastrophe, which careened from embarrassment to embarrassment," says one official. "Yet he was full of assurances that this wouldn't happen when the study got under way."

This criticism closely parallels that of-

fered by aides to President Nixon in 1972, shortly before Nixon decided to abolish the old White House Office of Science and Technology. On that occasion, some members of the President's Science Advisory Committee—which reported to science adviser Lee Dubridge—had publicly expressed their technical reservations about the Administration-backed supersonic jet transport. As now, the knives immediately came out for the bearer of bad news.

In a more general sense, Keyworth may have stepped on some toes merely because his responsibilities for coordination and management of interagency scientific disputes are resented by those who have a rival claim to this role or who have failed to win his support. For whatever reason, one official says that Keyworth's influence and access at the White House has recently been constricted, a charge that he firmly denies. When he is in town, Keyworth says, he attends "three out of the five" White House management meetings chaired by Meese every week. "But it is true that over the last 19 months, I have been on the road a lot, devoting a great deal of my time to the Star Wars effort. As a result, I suppose I've been less a part of the daily process around there. As to the present discussions on tax reform, entitlement programs, and broad domestic spending questions, I certainly do not feel that I have been a very important contributor to that strategy." But when important matters of science and technology have arisen, his office does contribute, Keyworth says.

Some of Keyworth's critics outside the government say that on several major issues, such as Star Wars and the space station, it seems as if the President has influenced Keyworth and not the other way around. Indeed, Keyworth regards his promotion of the President's ideas as one of his primary functions. "No one would fault him for lack of loyalty," says the White House official. "But this Administration likes to manage its media image carefully, and some of his unplanned appearances in the press have sparked resentment." In publicly backing some of Reagan's more politically controversial programs, then, Keyworth has to some extent politicized his own office. As a result, he has become deeply enmeshed in internal White House political squabbles.

Although Keyworth's position seems secure for now, as a result of his meeting with Reagan and his continuing close ties to Meese, his fortunes could decline after Meese's expected departure to become Attorney General. A lot hinges on whether the pragmatic or conservative clique at the White House triumphs. Officials say that if OSTP were indeed eliminated, its work would be divided between the National Science Foundation and the National Security Council, as it was in the early 1970's. Congress reacted to Nixon's decision by reinstating the office through federal legislation in 1975, and so it would have to approve of the office's destruction.

Keyworth believes that OSTP will disappear only if the Administration creates a Cabinet-level science and technology department, which will fulfill much of OSTP's role anyway. At that point, Reagan is unlikely to want an independent source of scientific advice within the White House bureaucracy. One of the principal historical rationales for such advice—a desire to counterbalance technical advice by the Pentagon—has never held much appeal either for Keyworth or his boss.—**R. JEFFREY SMITH**

NIH Proposes Extending Life of Grants

The value of extending the length of research grants from 3 years to 5 or more is being tested selectively by some special programs

A plan to put more stability into the biomedical research enterprise by extending the average length of grants from 3 to 5 years is under active discussion at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Possible changes, many of which would be implemented through the peer review system, were the sole topic of a recent meeting of the NIH Director's Advisory Committee.

Budgetary constraints cost NIH a 12 percent loss in purchasing power in the period from 1979 to 1982, NIH data show. As a result, grants became increasingly more difficult to obtain. On a scale of 500 to 100, the score or rating one had to achieve to get a grant funded climbed upward, like grade creep in colleges, and researchers began to see more and more applications being turned down for what seemed to be arbitrary reasons. Concern about the way the peer review system operates and unrest about the frequency with which people are forced to spend time writing renewal applications for the 3-year grants they do get have created additional anxiety in an already competitive system.

"This advisory meeting is, in part, a response to that anxiety in the research community," said NIH director James B. Wyngaarden. "We are looking for ways to simplify the application and review process and hoping to find ways of awarding a larger number of grants for 4 or 5 years rather than 3. The fact that we are looking at these issues seriously should 'carry a message' to scientists."

A couple of alternatives are being examined. One would focus efforts at extending the length of grants for first-time applicants. "Many brand new projects don't really begin to produce anything for the first 12 to 18 months because the young investigator is just setting up his or her lab and getting the experiments under way," Wyngaarden notes. "It isn't always realistic to expect these young scientists to be far enough along to be ready to reapply when they have to if they have only a 3-year start up grant." Wyngaarden, who would like to see grant length extended across-the-board, leans toward favoring the young investigator if a choice has to be made.

Others lean toward favoring mid-career or established researchers who need resources to continue good work and to maintain laboratories with some sense of stability. Joshua Lederberg, president of Rockefeller University, attended the meeting as a special adviser to the director. "I would put more emphasis on the 5-year award for established investigators," he said, adding that the peer review of applications should shift its emphasis away from the details of a proposal and toward an assessment of the overall track record of the applicant and the general research strategy put forth in the proposal. "You don't need to review a good researcher as often as every 3 years," he stated.

A change from longer to shorter grant lifetime has entered the system gradual-