PHYSICS IN GOVERNMENT

Budgetary restraints

The extent of federal support for many physics programs in fiscal 1967 depends on the outcome of President Johnson's current peace offensive for Vietnam. Already the pressure of an expected $60 billion defense budget has forced the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to cancel further work on its Advanced Orbiting Solar Observatory and to defer for another two years its Voyager mission to Mars. (Voyager had already been delayed two years by cuts in this year's budget.) The Apollo lunar landing project, however, will continue on schedule.

At the time of the AOSO cancellation, NASA was developing a prototype of the 1250-pound solar observatory and had scheduled its first flight for 1969. While putting off until 1973 the first unmanned Voyager journey to Mars, NASA has set up three new Mariner flights to Venus and to Mars. These flights will include a 1967 Venus flyby, to be closer than the 21 600-mile Mariner II approach, and two Mars probes in 1969. Presumably any lessening of military demands on the federal budget will enable NASA to reinstate the AOSO project and restore the original schedule for Voyager. Both projects are of highest priority for the scientific community.

NASA was not the only agency to feel the effects of budgetary cutbacks. Sources in the capital reported that budget requests for the National Institutes of Health for fiscal 1967 were being reduced by about 30 per cent; that all new research and training grants were frozen pending a decision on the new budget; and that no funds will be available for construction of health research facilities. It seems reasonable to expect that analogous programs in the National Science Foundation or the Atomic Energy Commission would also suffer restraint, but no definite decisions will be made until after the President offers his budget to the Congress on 25 Jan. Meanwhile, AEC is proceeding on the assumption that, once it selects a site, it will get the $7.5 million it needs for architectural engineering studies of the 200-BeV accelerator. Should these funds be denied, Congress could authorize use of other AEC funds, or AEC could request a supplemental appropriation later on.

Criticism directed at the federal government because of the reported cutbacks has come from many quarters including economists, labor leaders and scientists themselves. At its recent Berkeley, Calif., meeting, the council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science issued a statement saying it was "deeply disturbed" by the impending restrictions. Science "may be badly damaged in a society which gives an increasing share of its resources to military purposes." In the first of two resolutions, the council commended recent efforts to end the Vietnam conflict, which, according to the council, "imposes a heavy burden on the continued vigor of scientific research." The second resolution provided for a committee to examine decreased federal support for science and assess the consequences.

Operating the 200-BeV

Although competition, political and otherwise, for the 200-BeV-accelerator site will continue until the last moment, the nation's scientists seem determined to operate the machine for the benefit of the entire physics community. The Universities Research Association Inc. (URAI), established last summer by 34 university presidents, has offered its services to the government as "contracting agency for the construction and operation" of the new accelerator. Despite URAI's independent character, several government science officials (Frederick Seitz, Donald Hornig and Glenn Seaborg) were instrumental in its formation; and the National Academy of Sciences enjoys especially close ties with it.

Frederick Seitz will serve as vice president of URAI until its 1966 annual meeting in April; G. Donald Meid, NAS business manager, will be treasurer and comptroller; and Leonard L. Bacon, NAS special assistant to Seitz, will serve as URAI's secretary. The president of the organization until the April meeting is J. C. Warner, recently retired president of Carnegie Institute of Technology.

The wisdom of the concept of private university management coupled with government funds has been amply demonstrated by the experience of Associated Universities Inc. and other groups. Apparently it is this experience that the new group, URAI, wishes to draw upon in running the 200-BeV accelerator. The nine universities that form Associated Universities (which operates Brookhaven National Laboratory and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory) are among the 34 that seek to operate the new machine; and Brookhaven's director, Maurice Goldhaber, is among the trustees. Although none of the smaller institutions are represented in the URAI group, access to the new accelerator is expected to follow along the same lines as at Brookhaven, which makes its facilities "freely available to all qualified scientists." (A recent man-hour estimate supplied to PHYSICS TODAY by Brookhaven shows that 35 per cent of the lab's time in high-energy physics is accounted for by representatives from the nine operating universities, 35 per cent by scientists from all other institutions, and 30 per cent by Brookhaven staff members).

Recently URAI announced the election of Henry D. Smyth of Princeton University as chairman of its board of trustees, and Robert F. Bacher of California Institute of Technology as vice chairman. Serving on the board-of-trustees executive committee, aside from Smyth and Bacher, are Leon Madansky (committee chairman), Edwin L. Goldwasser, J. C. Warner, George S. Schairer, and R. D. Strathmeyer.

States plan to aid education

While federal agencies soar toward a $4.1 billion yearly budget for education, the states are responding cautiously with their own Compact for Education "to promote state initiative in the development of educational systems. . . ."

Originated by former governor Terry Sanford from a suggestion made