state & society

Nixon proposes new energy departments, more R&D money

The possibility of major energy shortages in the future has prompted the Administration to propose the reorganization of departments in energy-related fields, in an effort to develop a sound national energy policy. Legislation (HR 9090) cosponsored by Representative Chet Holifield (D-Calif.), chairman of the Government Operations Committee, embodies President Nixon's proposals for the reorganization. Hearings are underway to examine the many parts of the proposal.

The organizational highlights of the legislation are depicted on the accompanying chart. The Department of Energy and Natural Resources (DENR) would be forged primarily out of the Department of the Interior; R&D would be carried out under the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), derived mostly from the AEC. Also included in the plan is the formation of the Nuclear Energy Commission (the remainder of AEC after DENR and ERDA have taken various sections) with responsibility for reactor licensing and safety.

In the executive office of the President, the Energy Policy Office (EPO) has been formed and is headed by former Colorado Governor John A. Love. EPO and its director would probably serve an important role in the Nixon energy scheme, according to Holifield, who commented, "In practice coordination between [the various proposed agencies] will be essential but not easy to achieve. Presumably, the President's adviser [Love], in the capacity of Director of EPO, will be charged with effecting the necessary coordination."

Aside from government reorganization, a call has been sounded for more R&D money. The original Administration energy R&D request was for $770 million for FY 1974 of which $88 million was to be earmarked for fusion research. Congress is now working on a $98.1-million fusion R&D proposal with the money divided between magnetic confinement work ($56.8 million) and laser-pellet research ($41.3 million). The Administration proposal to add $100 million to the overall energy R&D effort may yield further money for fusion research. For the longer term the President suggested a five-year, $10 000 million energy R&D outlay that is comparable to a ten-year, $20 000 million program proposed by Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.).

To aid in the evaluation of R&D programs, the President has asked AEC to establish energy research priorities for FY 1974. Recommendations for government programs were due 1 September and the R&D analysis for nongovernment research activities are due by December.

NSF Office. In response to the need for an independent source of advice and analysis to the executive office of the President on energy R&D and other energy-related programs, NSF has established the Office of Energy Research and Development Policy to be headed by Paul F. Donovan, formerly director of the Division of Advanced Technology Applications in the RANN program. The office is designed to replace and expand the energy R&D policy functions of the now disbanded Of-

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LOVE

Summit agreement on atomic-energy collaboration

Expanded research cooperation in physics is expected to grow out of a June agreement signed by President Richard M. Nixon and Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. The pact, Scientific and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, will provide for collaboration in

- controlled thermonuclear fusion research, where the aim is the eventual development of prototype and demonstration-scale reactors.
- the development of fast breeder reactors (especially those employing liquid-metal technology), including work on the design, construction and operation of fast breeder power plants.
- research to determine the fundamental properties of matter. Accelerator and data processing facilities in both countries will be employed, along with possible new joint facilities for high, medium and low-energy physics.

There are important differences between this agreement and the earlier memoranda of cooperation that had existed between the AEC and the Soviet State Committee on the Utilization of Atomic Energy. The new accord is between the governments of the two countries, which, according to AEC Chairman Dixy Lee Ray, will allow other government agencies such as NSF or the National Bureau of Standards, or non-government bodies to become involved in US–USSR projects. The agreement extends over 10 years, allowing more continuity than the series of two-year agreements that had previously been in effect. Under the new agreement, she said, it is also possible to jointly build facilities for use in a specialized field (such as high-energy physics), where this could not have been done by drawing upon the resources of a single country.

Ray explained that several areas of nuclear research are not covered by the agreement. Laser fusion work is not, even though much work in this field is being conducted in both countries. Uranium enrichment technology, which Ray said is essentially a commercial venture, is also not included.

Energy departments

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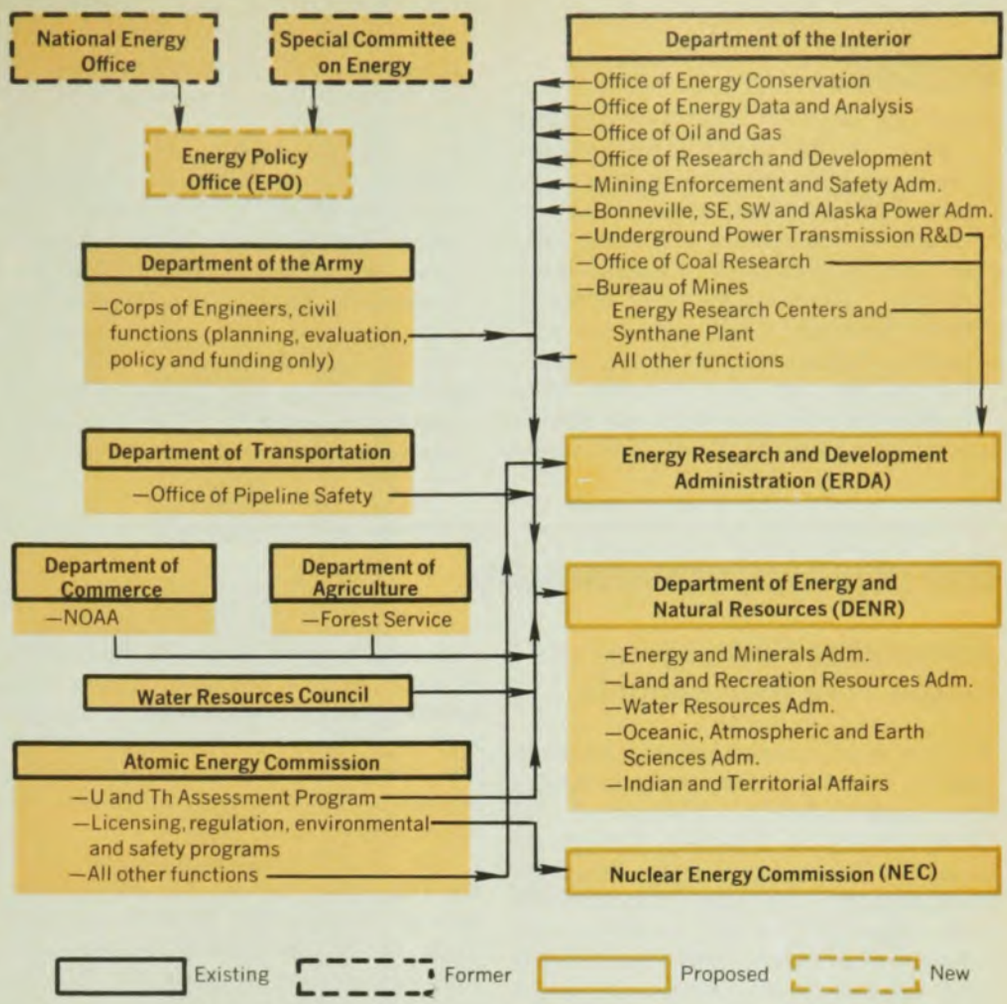
fice of Science and Technology, which had at most three people involved in energy R&D policy. Donovan expects to have a ten-member staff to span the many facets (environmental, economic and technological) of the energy problem and he will report directly to NSF director H. Guyford Stever in support of his role as the President's Science Adviser.

In addition, through grants and contracts, the new NSF office can support energy R&D policy investigations outside the Foundation to provide backup information in such areas as R&D in the private sector, manpower needs, international R&D efforts and the design of a national systems approach to analyze the energy situation.

The NSF energy R&D policy office will, then, provide information to the executive office of the President and to other government agencies that will aid in the coordination of their efforts on a national scale. The NSF office will interact closely with the new White House EPO, which will not have the staff or resources to carry on intensive R&D policy investigations; EPO must cover a much broader spectrum of issues than just R&D analysis. —RAS



Drew to head Science and Technology Policy Office

The Science and Technology Policy Office has been formed within the NSF. The office and its newly appointed director, physicist Russell C. Drew, will aid NSF director H. Guyford Stever now that the functions of the Office of Science and Technology (OST) have been transferred to the director of NSF.

The office will assist Stever in providing advice and recommendations on national science and technology policy, developing technical options for national problems in the civilian sector, appraising federal and national R&D effectiveness, coordinating Federal R&D programs (and providing staff support for the Federal Council for Science and Technology), interacting with academic and industrial science communities on science policy, and providing advice in furthering US international science and technology objectives.

Drew has a PhD in physics from Duke University. From 1966 to 1972 he served as Technical Assistant to the President's Science Adviser in OST. In the past year he was chief of the Office of Naval Research Branch Office in London. While at OST, he guided a series of advisory panels dealing with many topics including space technology, biomedical R&D, telecommunications and air traffic control. Drew also worked with the State Department and the National Security Council to develop policies for international cooperation in space.

La Silla observatory lets contract for buildings

A major contract for $3.7 million was signed recently for the buildings to house the European Southern Observatory's 3.6-meter optical telescope at ESO's La Silla site in Chile. Total cost of the project is budgeted at $26.3 million.

Contracts have already been awarded for the dome, the main structure of the telescope, special gearing for its mountings, a new power supply of 3 × 450 kVA motor-generator sets, and air-conditioning to maintain the telescope and instrumentation under constant conditions. The polishing of the mirror, ordered from Corning Glass of the US six years ago, is nearing completion in Ballainvilliers, France.

La Silla ("The Saddle") is situated on the southern edge of Chile's Atacama desert in the province of Coquimby at an altitude of 2440 meters.

Although ESO already operates six telescopes at La Silla, the 3.6-meter reflector will be the largest. Construction, soon to begin, will use Chilean labor and a team of four supervisors from The Netherlands. It will take about 30 months. If all goes according to plan, observation with the instrument can begin in 1976.

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