

ERDA arrives

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Natural Resources that would absorb the present Department of Interior. This may explain why President Ford named Secretary of Interior Rogers C. B. Morton to head the newly established Energy Resources Council, which will be mainly responsible for coordinating and overseeing a national energy policy. The ERC was authorized by the ERDA legislation to aid in the transition of agencies and is designed to terminate when a permanent Department of Energy and Natural Resources is established, or in two years, whichever occurs first. ERC now appears destined to play a much more powerful role than intended by the ERDA legislation. In addition to Morton, ERC members include the Administrator of the FEA, the ERDA Administrator, the Secretary of State, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and a number of other federal officials concerned with energy. More is expected to be heard about a cabinet department for energy when the President unveils his legislative program for fiscal year 1976 later this month.

Specific ERDA programs. The six ERDA Assistant Administrators are responsible for

► **Fossil-energy development.** Although the specific programs are not spelled out in the legislation, OMB spokesmen told PHYSICS TODAY that the section will include research on coal liquefaction and gasification, gas and oil, and advanced technology related to combustion systems, mining technology and off-shore drilling.

► **Nuclear-energy development.** This program will consist of reactor R&D, controlled thermonuclear research, naval reactors, space nuclear systems, reactor safety research and uranium enrichment R&D.

► **Environment and safety.** This includes biomedical and environmental research, waste management and transportation, and operational safety.

► **Solar, geothermal and advanced energy systems.** The Assistant Administrator for this program will be responsible for all physical research now in AEC, solar heating and cooling development, geothermal power development, transmission and storage, advanced concepts, magnetohydrodynamics and tides and wind research.

► **National security.** Military applications of laser fusion, international security affairs and reactor materials production are part of this section. (Uranium enrichment and reactor-materials production may be incorporated in the same program.)

► **Conservation.** This section, which is likely to get great emphasis in the short term, will be made up of EPA's ad-

vanced automotive power systems, end-use technologies for using energy more efficiently, and residential and commercial building efficiencies.

Not yet determined is where AEC's Office of Research and Laboratory Coordination and International Programs will fit in. There is also a possibility that CTR will be put into the solar, geothermal and advanced energy systems program.

The Assistant Administrators will have use of the field offices, contract operations, installations and facilities transferred from AEC and other agencies. Full-time government personnel in ERDA is expected to number about 7100 in FY 1975 but contract personnel will boost the number to more than 100 000. ERDA will also have at least six and perhaps as many as nine additional offices that will report directly to the Administrator.

Solar research. Although ERDA's hold is far-reaching, the agency will by no means incorporate all energy research in the federal government. One area of controversy not yet resolved is solar research. Key programs on solar research are likely to remain in the NSF, at least for the time being. Indeed, NSF recently signed a memorandum of understanding with NASA for collaboration in research on terrestrial uses of solar energy—a program with a budget of about \$1 billion in the next five years. The ERDA legislation calls for a transfer of \$25 million in solar-energy development funds from NSF in FY 1975, but this apparently excludes solar-energy basic research and those stages of applied solar research that are still at an early stage. Areas expected to stay in NSF include photovoltaic conversion, bioconversion to fuels, ocean thermal energy conversion, solar thermal conversion, wind energy conversion, and heating and cooling of buildings by systems using solar collector arrays.

Nuclear regulation. Most ERDA personnel will be at the AEC's facilities in Germantown, Maryland, but a site for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has not yet been selected. The budget for NRC also has not been announced. NRC will have five commissioners, one of whom will be the chairman; all will require presidential appointment and Senate confirmation. Each of the five commissioners will have equal authority although the chairman will be the official spokesman with Congress, government agencies and the public.

NRC will have three major offices with three directors appointed by and reporting to the Commissioner. The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation will have principal licensing and regulation responsibilities involving all facilities and materials licensed under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. The Office

of Nuclear Safety and Safeguards will be concerned primarily with the processing, transportation and handling of nuclear materials, including the provision and maintenance of safeguards against threats, thefts and sabotage of licensed facilities and materials. The Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research will develop and carry out recommendations for research deemed necessary for it to perform its licensing and related regulatory functions.

As established by law, the commission will have an independent capability for developing and analyzing technical information related to reactor safety, safeguards, and environmental protection in support of the licensing and regulatory process. However, the House-Senate conference report on ERDA and the NRC states that "it is not intended that the Commission build its own laboratories and facilities for research and development or try to duplicate the research and development responsibilities of ERDA." The Commission can draw upon ERDA and other federal agencies for research findings and assistance. The conference report states that "It would be a serious mistake, however, to make a regulatory agency responsible for the performance of research that goes beyond the needs for confirmatory assessment . . . Indeed, to exceed these bounds creates a conflict of interest."

Also reporting to the Commission will be an atomic safety and licensing board panel, an atomic safety and licensing appeal panel, and an advisory committee on reactor safeguards.

Outlook. The future of ERDA and the NRC, as well as the potpourri of other federal agencies and groups involved in energy, will become clearer later this month when FY 1976 budgets are revealed, and in the coming months as the newly formed bureaucracies settle down.

—Madeleine Jacobs

in brief

Applications for National Science Foundation NATO Senior Fellowships in Science will be accepted until 1 March. For program announcement (E 75-14) and applications, write to Fellowship and Traineeships Section, Division of Higher Education in Science, NSF, Washington, D.C. 20550.

The application deadlines for two NSF programs have been extended—to 28 February for the Senior Foreign Energy Scholars Program and to 7 February for Faculty Fellowships in Science. Contact Fellowships and Traineeships Section, Division of Higher Education in Science, NSF, Washington, D.C. 20550. □