

In Pursuit Of the Nation's Health

**Technology for health,
research and a new
task force are proposed**

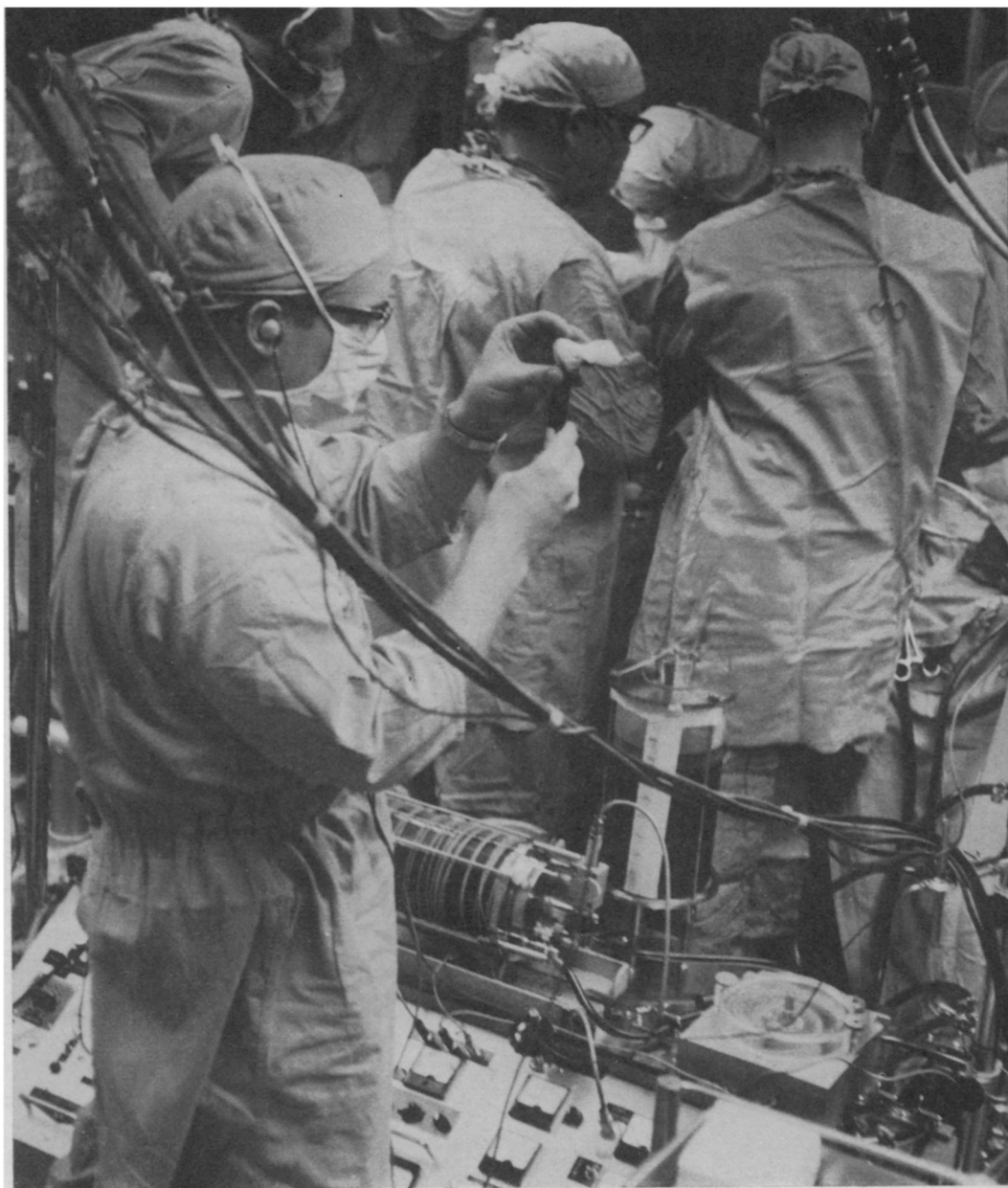
President Johnson wants the American people to get their money's worth out of the \$43 billion they are spending for health and medical care every year. He's already proposed \$1 billion more for health research and services next year than this year's \$2.3 billion Federal health budget. And he detailed \$200 million of that in new programs last week, in his annual health message to the Congress.

Establishment of a National Center for Health Services Research and Development, with new legislation to authorize use of Federal hospitals as research centers that will feed into the inefficient civilian system, was one of the major points in his Message on Education and Health in America.

Bioengineering and the application of technology to health problems could be a major beneficiary.

This message was followed by a 35-page message on the rising cost of medical services and the calling of a National Conference on Medical Costs by Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare John W. Gardner for spring.

Among the cost-reducing recommendations made by HEW was an intensive examination of frequently prescribed drugs to find the comparative effectiveness of brand-name products and their generic equivalents (SN:3/4). Other recommendations included the encouragement of group practice and comprehensive community health care.



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The President said very little has been done to mobilize American universities, industry, private practitioners and research institutions to seek new ways of providing medical services. Hospitals and health centers need to apply advanced methods, systems analysis and automation to health care as efficiently as business does.

Ferretting out the spots where greatest neglect exists, the President said:

"In some U.S. counties infant mortality rates, one yardstick of health care, are 300 percent higher than the national average. Seventy percent of automobile accident deaths occur in communities of less than 2,500 people, where facilities are often poorest.

"Even though we have good techniques for detecting and curing cervical cancer, 8,000 women die each year for lack of proper care.

"Emergency rooms in U.S. hospitals are seriously overcrowded, not with actual emergency cases, but with peo-

ple who cannot find normal patient care anywhere else."

Although the President asks for an appropriation of only \$20 million to stimulate health-oriented research and development, this is nearly twice the amount appropriated for 1967. He said:

"We must marshal the nation's best minds to:

- "Design hospitals, nursing homes and group practice facilities which provide effective care with the most efficient use of funds and manpower;
- "Develop new ways of assisting doctors to reach more people with good health services;
- "Devise new patterns of health services."

Other recommendations for the 1968 budget included an increase of \$65 million—to an annual total of almost \$1.5 billion—to support biomedical research, largely through the programs of the National Institutes of Health.

The President asked an unnamed

amount to establish a John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Sciences and to provide scholarships and fellowships in the Center. The late Rep. Fogarty was Congress' principal advocate of Federal health programs. President Johnson also asked extension of a Federal partnership in state and local programs in fiscal 1968 totaling \$161 million, an increase of \$41 million over the 1967 fiscal year. This will give the states new "flexibility" to use Federal funds by freeing them from "tightly compartmentalized grant programs," and is a piece of a broader Federal-state partnership the Administration calls "creative Federalism."

"Our Regional Medical Programs



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Biomedical research resource.

for heart disease, cancer and stroke depend on a second partnership, involving doctors, medical schools, hospitals, and state and local health departments," the President said.

Because lung cancer is the leading cause of death from malignant disease, President Johnson directed Secretary Gardner to establish a Lung Cancer Task Force that, like other Cancer Task Forces already established, will bring together the resources of leading researchers for an all-out assault on this malignancy.

With the shortage in health manpower estimated to reach one million in the next 10 years, the President asked for a 22 percent increase in the 1968 appropriation, bringing the total to \$763 million. Plans include the use of thousands of medical corpsmen in the Armed Forces who return to civilian life each year and training is needed as well for other medical aides or physicians' assistants.

Space Budget Battle

The real battle hasn't started yet, but the troops are already out in force. The top brass of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration gathered en masse last week to defend its rich \$5.05 billion budget request against a siege by the House science committee; the pulling and hauling could last for weeks.

Even in the calm of the first encounter, NASA chief James E. Webb fired volley after volley, using both the Russians and the U.S. aerospace industry as his weapons.

The Russians have been active with very large rockets for four years, Webb said. "I believe they are clearly ahead (of the U.S.) and will stay ahead."

Included in NASA's proposed budget is a potential gap-closer—a nuclear-powered upper-stage rocket which could produce a quarter of a million pounds of thrust and could double the payload capability of the huge Saturn V booster that will send the Apollo astronauts to the moon.

As Webb was digging in on Capitol Hill, President Johnson joined the fray on the side of the nuclear rocket by sending Congress a request for \$91 million for Project Rover. Rover is an on-again, off-again nuclear rocket project that since the end of 1963 has never been permitted to include plans for development as far as a flight test model. If the President's recommendation is accepted, the first test engine should be delivered by 1971, with flight versions to follow. Of the total sum requested, \$50 million would go to NASA, the rest to the Atomic Energy Commission.

NASA's budget conflict with the Congress will not get really heavy until March 14, when the budget will be dissected into bits, such as Apollo applications and aeronautical research, for scrutiny by individual Congressional subcommittees.

And scrutiny there will be. Though Webb repeatedly refers to the proposed budget as "austere" and "thin," it is still \$83 million bigger than the current one. What Webb really wants is the \$6 billion or so he says is needed to "give us preeminence in all major aspects of space and aeronautics."

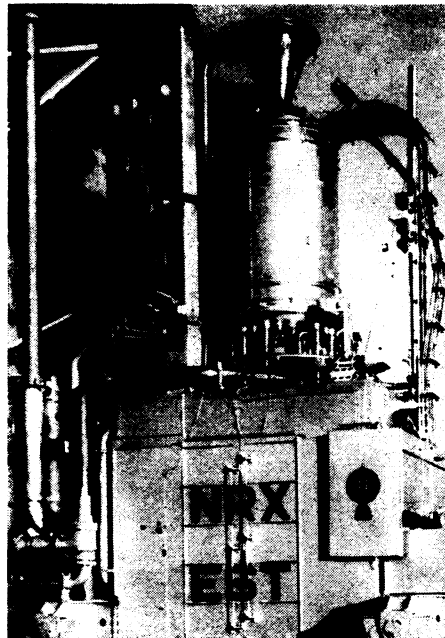
As things are now, space manpower and production are both down from their peaks, since Apollo is approaching its end and new programs have not yet been funded. "Failure to approve new programs this year," warned Webb, "will be a signal to the world that we are not in space to stay," and in the case of the Saturn family of booster rockets, "is equivalent to a decision to stop production."

As a result of the Jan. 27 Apollo fire

on the moon-landing timetable, Webb said, "We cannot now state whether we will be able to meet the goal of a manned lunar landing before 1970." The possibility, he admitted, is "more remote" than it was before the accident.

The day before, Webb and other NASA officials had reported that specific safety improvements, including a gas-operated quick-release escape hatch, will be installed on the next Apollo spacecraft, now on the assembly lines at North American Aviation, Downey, Calif. Among the changes will be:

- Removal or relocation of flammable materials in the capsule;
- Modifications to the electrical system, where the fire may have started;
- The communications system, which could have provided better links than it did between the spacecraft and the control center;
- The environmental control system, which presently contains a flammable compound, ethylene glycol, as a coolant;
- Safety procedures during tests, which at the time of the accident were "focused on propellant hazards and did not include provisions to meet spacecraft fires."



Nuclear rocket engine: Rover-to-be.

Meanwhile . . .

Back at the White House, President Johnson proposed another budget amendment having to do with space, but in an unusual way. As part of his health and education message to Congress (see story), the President recommended \$9 million for the establishment of a "Corporation for Public Television," one of whose first jobs would be to study the possibility of an educational satellite system.