

laureates in past years. Almost simultaneously, it was disclosed by NIH that all three have been hit by the across-the-board reductions in research support. "We are not being able to keep what we have called over the years a moral commitment," an NIH spokesman says.

During the current fiscal year, Dr. Hershey, who has won NIH backing for 20 years, took a 10 percent cut in funds, from \$45,399 to \$40,860. Dr. Luria's grant was sliced nine percent, from \$60,731 to \$55,266 and Dr. Delbruck lost eight percent, from \$406,274 to \$373,760. Dr. Delbruck's funds are part of a large grant to several members of the faculty of Caltech while the other two scientists receive individual grants.

It also became known this week that Dr. Luria has been barred from serving on NIH grant review panels since his name was blacklisted in a procedure established during the McCarthy era. Several hundred scientists are so blacklisted, the journal *SCIENCE* has reported, for what was believed to be security reasons when the procedure was established. □

MARIJUANA

Administration about-face

When he was a candidate last year, President Nixon strenuously deplored the increasing use of outlawed drugs and promised that his Administration would initiate a stern crackdown on drug abuse. In the decade between 1958 and 1968 the number of drug arrests had climbed from about 10,000 to more than 160,000, and the proportion of offenders under 21 years of age rose from 14 percent to 56 percent.

It was obvious that new legislation was needed, if for no other reason than that the existing drug laws are in a state of confusion: The penalties for the illicit sale of LSD, for example, are considerably lighter than the penalties for selling marijuana, although LSD is considered a far more powerful drug. Moreover, the Supreme Court recently ruled that the Marijuana Tax Act, which is the principal Federal marijuana law, violates the Fifth Amendment by requiring unauthorized users of marijuana to incriminate themselves through payment of the tax.

The President's intentions during the campaign and his intentions at the present moment look quite different, though. The new Administration indeed initiated stern measures, but has now done a 180-degree turn. As originally introduced by the late Sen. Everett M. Dirksen, the Administration-sponsored drug bill included marijuana in the same category with heroin

and required mandatory minimum penalties of five years or \$25,000 for a first-offense conviction of possession. The strict penalties, however, were opposed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the National Institute of Mental Health, and Sen. Thomas Dodd (D-Conn.), whose Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency heard testimony on drug abuse throughout the summer, sponsored a softer bill. In contrast to the Administration proposal, the Dodd bill contains no mandatory minimum penalties and suggested that judges grant probation to first offenders convicted of possessing marijuana.

The Dirksen proposals were categorically rejected by the scientific community (SN: 10/11, p. 350), and several months ago the Administration began to follow suit. It is now arguing for a drug bill which relaxes, rather than tightens, the present penalties.

Mr. Nixon's about-face began on a tentative note in September when Attorney General John Mitchell told the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency that the Administration had merely followed the existing penalty structure in drawing up its bill. "This does not mean that there are not other equally reasonable alternative approaches," Mitchell said, adding that he "personally" was in favor of more flexible penalties. He made it clear that the Administration would not care if someone revised its bill.

No one did, but neither was there a storm of outraged public opinion following Mitchell's trial balloon. And this week Administration spokesmen returned with specific proposals for rewriting the law. On Oct. 14 Dr. Roger O. Egeberg, assistant secretary for health and scientific affairs at HEW, had testified that the Government had determined hallucinogens such as marijuana to be fundamentally different from narcotics; in any case, Dr. Egeberg pointed out, a law "making a large part of our population criminals by definition" would be nearly unenforceable. Then, on Monday, John Ingersoll, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, repeated Dr. Egeberg's contentions and advised the Dodd subcommittee that the Administration wishes to do away with the mandatory sentences for first-offense marijuana possession. Ingersoll recommended that marijuana no longer be considered in the same category as heroin, but be treated the same as amphetamines, barbiturates and other drugs which "normally lead to a moderate dependency."

The Administration still wishes to distinguish sharply between simple possession of illegal drugs and professional trafficking; in the latter case, and re-

gardless of the drug, according to Ingersoll, the offender should be locked up "for as long as rationally possible." Possession of marijuana with intent to sell can be penalized with a five-year prison sentence for a first offense.

Mr. Nixon has presented Congress with a variety of sentencing schemes, in varying degrees of severity, from which to choose.

The Administration also wishes to enable the Attorney General to reclassify marijuana as either more dangerous or less dangerous at some later date, and it intends to provide itself with grounds for altering the law by creating a commission to study marijuana under the auspices of the Department of Justice.

RUSSIAN SPACE STATIONS

Still in the future

More than 1,750 man-made objects are now in space. Most are junk—burned-out rockets and fragmented debris—while more than 400 are operational sky-spies, weather-watchers, research probes and other devices.

Conspicuously absent from the inventory, however, is a device that could become a keystone of future space efforts: a permanent, or long-life, space station.

Practically every visionary anticipation of a full-flowering Space Age has envisioned some kind of large, orbiting facility for tasks ranging from servicing recalcitrant satellites to launching manned flights to distant planets.

The U.S. Gemini and Apollo programs have demonstrated the necessary docking techniques for assembling modular equipment in orbit; in January the Russians followed suit by coupling and jointly maneuvering the manned Soyuz 4 and 5 spacecraft, adding a spacewalk from one craft to the other that could have represented a repairman trouble-shooting an orbiting platform.

Last week, a troika of Soviet spacecraft seemed ready to take the next big step: the joining in space of three separately launched pieces of equipment (SN: 10/18, p. 347). As the week ended, however, so did hopes for the triple coupling. One by one on succeeding days, in the same order in which they were launched, Soyuz 6, 7 and 8 returned to earth, their main mission apparently unfulfilled.

For the U.S., a three-way docking ought not present any major technical hurdles—the entire Gemini program was largely devoted to learning how to bring spacecraft together in orbit. Russia has two automatic unmanned dockings to her credit, as well as the one manned maneuver. "Plugging three