

## The deep six for NOAA

A noticeable atmosphere of gloom has descended around proponents of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) within the Federal Government.

The proposal to establish such an agency, encompassing some but by no means all of the nation's marine science activities, is now more than 14 months old (SN: 1/18/69, p. 62). Legislation to create NOAA has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. Hearings have been held, last year by the Subcommittee on Oceanography of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries (SN: 10/11, p. 325) and this year by the newly created Subcommittee on Oceanography of the Senate Committee on Commerce. A great deal of favorable testimony from industry and academic boosters of ocean activity has been heard.

**But the response** of the Nixon Administration has been markedly unenthusiastic.

There seems little reason to dispute the pessimism of Dr. William M. Chapman, a NOAA supporter who is currently a member of more than a score of advisory groups in marine affairs and who has testified on marine resource needs before Congressional groups for more than 20 years. "I have quite lost hope," he told the Senate subcommittee last month, "that H. R. 13247 or S. 2841 (the NOAA bill) is going to be enacted by the Congress."

**The problems** of NOAA go beyond the normal territorial-protective impulses of Federal agencies resisting creation of any new agency out of the ongoing programs of existing ones. NOAA has fallen victim to the larger issue of the organization of the entire Executive Branch of the Government, when most substantive attention is going toward attacking problems of the environment and natural resources of all kinds, not just oceanic.

In recent Senate testimony one agency head after another concluded by urging that no formal action on NOAA legislation be taken until the President has considered the recommendations of the year-long study of his Council on Executive Organization, headed by Roy L. Ash of Litton Industries. The council is to report to the President by April 15.

Last week on the floor of the Senate, the chairman of the oceanography subcommittee, Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), charged that the White House staff has been attempting to scuttle the NOAA concept in favor of a counter proposal placing a part of the oceans program under the Department of the

Interior. The Ash Council, he said, long ago made up its mind on oceanic reorganization.

Under the Administration plan, the Department of the Interior will be reshuffled, says Hollings. The Environmental Science Services Administration will be brought in from the Commerce Department, the National Sea Grant Program from the National Science Foundation, the U. S. Lake Survey from the Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanographic Data Center and the National Oceanographic Instrumentation Center from the Department of Defense. There they would be joined with Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and with the marine programs of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, Parks and Marine Resources would be retitled the Assistant Secretary for Oceanography and Meteorology.

Although White House aides do not explicitly confirm the Hollings version, they indicate that the Ash Council's thinking has definitely been in the direction of incorporating ocean activities within Interior rather than within a new agency. And the version fits with a number of other signs in recent months that the Administration is leaning toward a reorganized Interior Department as a base for its main activities in environment, natural resources and

oceanography.

The agencies and activities that would be incorporated within the Interior Department in the Administration plan correspond closely with those that would compose NOAA, except that the Coast Guard is left in the Department of Transportation.

But the fact that they would be under the wing of an existing department, already large and complex in organization and with a traditional emphasis on a spectrum of internal affairs not relating primarily to the ocean, is not agreeable to most NOAA proponents. They have hoped for the status, prestige and budgetary muscle of an independent agency. Some feel any move toward consolidation would be an improvement, but in Sen. Hollings' view, incorporation within Interior would torpedo the whole ocean program.

**"The oceans,"** he says, "are too important for the United States to afford anything but the highest level of attention."

Despite the Senator's plea, the signs are not hopeful for NOAA. "From the perspective of a scientist who happens to be an oceanographer, having an agency of his own seems like a good idea," says a staff member of the Ash Council. "But from the point of view of the President, the management of the programs might be better incorporated in an existing structure."

## AMBULATORY UNITS

### Revamping health care

Ever since the early years of the Johnson Administration, emphasis in Federal biomedical programs has been shifting from research to perfecting the delivery of health care. It is a direction in which the Nixon Administration is continuing (SN: 1/3, p. 7), but with an individual twist: The long-standing tendency to see the need for health care in terms of new hospital construction, which seems never to catch up to the need, is being replaced by an emphasis on ambulatory care, in an effort to take some of the pressure off the nation's hard-pressed hospitals.

**Increased funding** for the construction of community hospitals was among the reasons President Nixon opposed the controversial appropriations bill for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (SN: 2/21, p. 196). He emphasized instead the need for ambulatory-care facilities.

A trimmed-down version of the bill signed this week by the President reduces funds for new hospital construction, in accord with Mr. Nixon's wish. The new bill also carries a provision that allows the President to withhold 2 percent of funds, provided he does not

cut any one program more than 25 percent; it leaves research funds at the reduced level established earlier.

The philosophy behind the system of ambulatory care for hospital patients grows out of the realization that all sick people are not equally sick. They need three types of care: primary, secondary and tertiary. The idea seems elemental, but in practice it could create a health care revolution.

Primary care would be that care a patient receives before entering the hospital, and would be provided by out-patient clinics, emergency rooms and neighborhood health centers. Preventive health care would be delivered. Secondary care would be that provided by hospitalization, and tertiary care, if needed, would include recuperative facilities, sanitariums and the like.

Ambulatory care, which is literally that care a patient can receive while still on his feet, encompasses both primary and tertiary care. Accordingly, the patient would first visit an out-patient clinic, emergency room, or center where he would be diagnosed and treated by a physician. At this point, he may either be discharged by the