

fill it properly or he would not have accepted it, he says.

Dr. DuVal has impressive administrative and health credentials. He is a 48-year-old surgeon from New Jersey who was assistant director of the University of Oklahoma Medical School from 1962 to 1964. Since then he has proved himself as an administrator and leader at the University of Arizona in Tucson where he started and is at present dean of the college of medicine.

He is obviously acceptable to the White House, and his reputation within the medical profession has won him the enthusiastic support of the American Medical Association. And, unlike Dr. John Knowles (SN: 5/10/69, p. 451), no Senator has as yet taken offense at his political or philosophical positions or ambitions. □

MARIJUANA HEARINGS

Questioning the legal status

United States customs officials seized 104,303 pounds of marijuana in fiscal 1970. In the first nine months of fiscal 1971 they have already picked up 126,965 pounds of pot, says U.S. Commissioner of Customs Myles J. Ambrose. Facts and figures like these were presented this week as the President's National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse started hearings in Washington. Hearings will continue throughout the summer.

Much will be said about the increase of marijuana use, but the primary interest of the commission is the legal status of the drug. Drs. Harold Kolansky and William T. Moore were called to restate their findings on the psychological effects of pot smoking (SN: 4/24/71, p. 277). "If nothing is done to strengthen marijuana enforcement now," added Dr. Kolansky, "heroin addiction will become as epidemic in two years as marijuana is now." As before, these views were attacked from many sides. Dr. Leon Wurmser of Johns Hopkins' Drug Abuse Center in Baltimore called the study useless and harmful because the clinical effects of cannabis do not "outweigh in seriousness or even balance the clinical effects of legal prosecution, legal inconsistency and imprisonment."

Dr. Bertram S. Brown, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, proposed that marijuana possession penalties be "minimal or non-existent." John E. Ingersol, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, countered that cutting the penalty "would undermine the law."

The arguments seem partly in vain because at a May 1 news conference President Nixon said he would ignore any recommendation of the commission for legalizing marijuana. □

may 22, 1971

WATCH THE BIRDIE

Politics and the AEC budget

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission is supposed to be somewhat apart from the hurly-burly of politics. Established to be the guardian of the nation's present and long-term interest in atomic energy and related fields, it is expected, publicly at least, to pay more attention to the principles of physics than the principles of winning elections in the waterfront wards.

Last week the AEC went to the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy to ask for an amendment to its budget authorization for fiscal year 1972 that would add \$48.3 million to the original request of slightly more than \$2 billion. The questions the committeemen asked and the answers they got tend to show that several of the additional requests came about because the AEC is playing the role of birdie in a many-sided political badminton game.

One of the important, though shadowy, players is the Office of Management and Budget, formerly the Bureau of the Budget. Those whose pet projects have been cut out of Federal budgets allege that the OMB is the real power in the Government, a kind of bureaucratic Cardinal Mazarin. The OMB denies such accusations; it says it is concerned only with the Government's bookkeeping. The truth must be somewhere between since it appears from the JCAE hearings that the OMB indeed has a good deal to say about who gets how much money.

The joint committee has an old score to settle with the OMB, or whoever is behind the OMB, over the question of what to do with the AEC's three gaseous-diffusion plants that make enriched uranium for reactor fuel, and a request for an additional \$9.2 million for these plants was the occasion for airing it.

The plants, at Paducah, Ky., Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Portsmouth, Ohio, take uranium hexafluoride gas and sep-

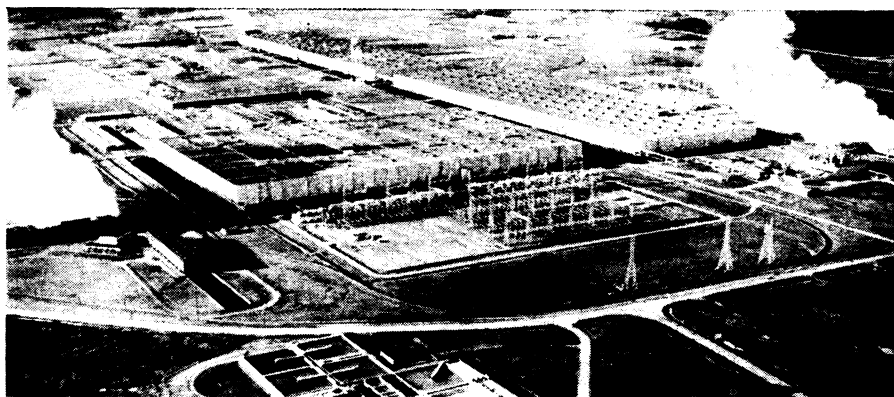
arate it into two streams, one in which the percentage of the fissionable isotope U-235 is higher than in the natural gas and one in which it is lower. The enriched gas is used to make fuel elements. The AEC is requesting the \$9.2 million to decrease the amount of enrichment in the product of the plants, contending that increased cost of electric power makes operation at the lower enrichment level more economical.

But the joint committee has a more comprehensive plan for Cascade, as the fuel enrichment program is called, and it has authorized money for this in the past. Rep. Craig Hosmer (R-Calif.) remarked: "It does little good to authorize \$16 million and not spend it."

Sen. John O. Pastore (D-R.I.), chairman of the joint committee, added: "We get into a lot of hocus-pocus. We authorize money, and money is frozen. We get ourselves very well involved in half measures and never get to the whole thing."

The \$16 million was authorized last year as part of a program to improve the gaseous-diffusion plants and upgrade their capacity to produce the fuel. The OMB has frozen this money, and the committeemen are furious. They want to know the official reason why, but the AEC doesn't know it, and the OMB so far hasn't told.

The reason probably has to do with the Administration's desire to sell the plants to private concerns. The joint committee, fearing another Dixon-Yates affair, refuses to countenance any such thing. Instead it pushes its Cascade Improvement Program to expand the plants under Government ownership. The Administration refuses to spend the money appropriated for the purpose, some suggest, because it doesn't want to improve property it intends to sell. The AEC position in this is one of "studied neutrality," according to a spokesman. In its heart of hearts the AEC would probably like to keep and expand the plants, but it doesn't dare say so.



AEC

Portsmouth enrichment plant: Whether to expand or sell is the question.