

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Glad Hand from Mr Daddario

THE House Committee on Science and Astronautics has accepted the view of Mr E. Q. Daddario's subcommittee that the budget of the National Science Foundation for 1971 should be increased by \$27.63 million to a total of what would be \$540 million. (The chief item in the proposed increase is that of \$10 million to allow the National Science Foundation to pay for research projects which were dropped by other agencies, possibly as a result of the Mansfield Amendment.) For practical purposes, this would allow the National Science Foundation something like \$20 million to cover a possible fallout from the Department of Defense in the next few months—a sum of money which falls far short of the most pessimistic estimates of what may be needed and which is only just more than a half of the amount by which the Department of Defense budget for university research and development has declined in 1970 and 1971. In short, even if the committee's suggestion that the National Science Foundation should have more money to spend on projects dropped by other agencies is eventually accepted by Congress and the Administration, it looks as if a good many deserving projects will be without support in the coming year.

The committee has also suggested that \$9.5 million should be added to the National Science Foundation budget to pay for graduate traineeships in the coming financial year. This would restore the National Science Foundation's spending under this heading to the level in the current financial year. During the authorization hearings in March, members of the Daddario subcommittee said they would consider restoring this item to the foundation's budget.

The new proposals also would strengthen the College Science Improvement Program by doubling the \$4 million at present included in the budget application, and would add \$4 million to support environmental research in federal laboratories. The second of these proposals is an expression of the subcommittee's fondness for finding work for government laboratories such as the AEC laboratory at Oak Ridge. By all accounts, the committee has no specific suggestions as to how the extra money should be spent, although it seems to have been assumed that one natural place for it would be in the still nascent IRPOS programme of Interdisciplinary Research on Problems of Our Society. For the rest, the committee has voted an extra \$120,000 in the hope that it will be possible to keep up the momentum of the National Science Foundation's hitherto cautious attempts to disseminate scientific methods among the states.

The future of the National Science Foundation budget does not, unfortunately, hang on the recommendations of the Daddario subcommittee. For one thing, the Senate has yet to begin its consideration of the foundation's proposals, although this will probably be done before the end of April. The present recommendation on the budget will be considered by the full House of Representatives towards the end of this month but, as in previous years, the last word will probably come from the appropriations subcommittee under Mr Joe Evans, which has, regrettably, a long tradition of being beastly to the National Science Foundation.

OCEANOGRAPHY

Pattern Not Yet in Sight

OCEANOGRAPHY, the public darling of the mid-sixties, still drifts in the doldrums, awaiting a framework within which it can develop successfully. Only a few years ago, it seemed to many people that the oceans held the key to the area of research and development likely to preoccupy the seventies. Now, as everybody knows, or thinks he knows, the wider environment is the goal. One result is that oceanographers are less at the centre of public attention than in the past. Another is that they may welcome this state of affairs, which does at least allow them to get on with the work they want to do. It is very much in this spirit that the National Science Foundation has announced the appointment of Dr J. L. McHugh as head of the office for the International Decade of Ocean Exploration recently set up by the foundation. The development of this part of the foundation's work, which will cost \$15 million in the coming year if Congress turns out to be lenient with the National Science Foundation, was one of the strong points of the foundation's development plan for the years ahead. The intention is that the International Decade of Ocean Exploration (IDOE) will concentrate on the identification of ways, natural or artificial, by which the oceans may be modified, particular studies of certain parts of the sea with particular attention to food chains and pollutants and the search for natural resources on the sea floor. Dr McHugh is a fisheries man who was head of biological research at the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service in the early sixties.

The International Decade of Ocean Exploration has been on the cards since October last year, when the first announcement was made of the commitment of United States resources and the appointment of the National Science Foundation as director of the operation. Roughly half the \$15 million made available to the foundation in the forthcoming year will be spent in universities, and roughly half by the Departments of Commerce (represented by the Environmental Science Services Administration) and of the Interior.

Dr McHugh said earlier this week that his first objective would be to create the forms of international collaboration which he considers essential to success. The general idea has apparently been received well by the members of the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, but Dr McHugh agrees that other nations will only finally make up their minds to commit themselves to this programme when they say that the United States "is willing to put its money where its mouth is". At the meeting of the UNESCO commission planned for next June, Dr McHugh hopes to be able to present other nations with a more tangible account of what the United States is planning even if the budget of the National Science Foundation has not by then been agreed. One difficulty in assessing the importance of the new development is that it is not yet clear how much of the new expenditure will be strictly new and how much will consist of a repackaging of work already being carried out by other agencies.

The fact that the National Science Foundation has been given the responsibility for coordinating the International Decade of Ocean Exploration will certainly be interpreted as a sign that the administration is willing to entrust it with executive responsibility to