

NEW WORLD

Coming and Going

THE departure of Robert Finch from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, made public last weekend, is only the most spectacular of several important resignations from the department in the past few months. Nobody at this stage can tell how well Mr Finch will settle down in his new role as Special Adviser to the President on domestic affairs—he is, after all, not the only high placed official at the White House with pretensions to such an influence. Those left behind at the department are no doubt hoping that the Secretary's departure will make it easier to stem the tide of discontent within the department and its dependencies, but even Mr Elliot Richardson, Mr Finch's successor and a man with a splendid reputation as an administrator, may be unable to manage successfully what is by common consent an unmanageable department. In the past few months, the discontent among those working for the department has been exacerbated by the fear that the department has been subjected to unwarrantable political pressures.

One sign of this was the resignation on June 2 of Dr Stanley Yolles, the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health. Dr Yolles has been at risk for some time, partly because of the way in which he has fought for comparatively lenient legislation on marijuana but also because of the way in which the National Institute of Mental Health has opposed the Department of Health, Education and Welfare on the method of managing the community mental health centres now being established at close on 500 sites in the United States. The issue is whether these should be managed directly by NIMH or, as the Administration would have it, by regional organizations. The result is that the National Institute of Mental Health will become an agency for making training awards and research grants—in other words, it will have been cut back to being what it was in the early sixties, a more or less equal partner with the institutes of the National Institutes of Health.

A few weeks earlier, on May 8, the head of Health Services and Mental Health Administration at the Health, Education and Welfare also resigned and, immediately afterwards, this post was transferred from the career civil service list to the list of posts in the presidential gift. Nobody complains that the man who succeeded Dr Joseph T. English, Dr Vernon Wilson from the University of Missouri, is an out and out Administration man, but the question has arisen of where properly to draw the line between political appointments and career appointments in the administration of scientific matters.

Memories still rankle of the way in which the appointment of Dr John Knowles, Director of Massachusetts General Hospital, as Assistant Secretary for Health, widely canvassed by Mr Finch, was eventually frustrated on political grounds. The post was eventually filled by Dr Roger Egeberg, but the incident has left among medical scientists the kind of impression created

a year earlier, when the appointment of Dr Frank Long as Director of the National Science Foundation was frustrated at the last minute on political grounds.

In the past few weeks, the pressures to which it was known that Dr Yolles had been exposed had apparently led to suggestions that Dr Robert Marston, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, might also be forced to tender his resignation. Although Dr Marston has survived from the days of the Johnson Administration, however, circumstances seem to be quite different and indeed it has become known that towards the end of April, before Dr Marston set off on a journey to the Soviet Union from which he has just returned, he was assured by Mr Finch that his appointment was not in jeopardy and on the face of things it is extremely hard to see why Mr Richardson, with all the other problems on his plate, should wish to go back on this promise.

SATELLITES

Impasse at Intelsat

from a Correspondent

AFTER six years of existence, Intelsat is stalled trying to decide what it is all about. The organization was formed in 1964 to establish a network of communications satellites for commercial use. The temporary agreement was in two parts; governments signed one, the telecommunications entities such as the British Post Office signed the other. The permanent treaty was to have been signed in 1969. It was not, because the non-American members of Intelsat did not want the status quo to continue: they, with their numbers increasing constantly from the original 14 (there are now 76 members of Intelsat), were unhappy to have the network continue to be managed by the American private corporation, Comsat. Last March the second full Intelsat conference in Washington finally agreed, or Comsat conceded, that Intelsat should be managed by an international directorate after a measured phasing-out period. But even then no permanent agreement was produced. Fresh fighting has broken out over a new question: are governments to have any voice in how Intelsat is run or is it to be a purely commercial organization, run by telecommunications men only?

It seems absurd that an organization which has achieved its major goal in a relatively short time (the satellites are in place and working well) should have to go back to the beginning and question the reason for its existence. But the question is both legitimate and profound. It was not faced sooner because of the haste in the early sixties to get on with the new technology: to put the satellites in orbit and talk about them afterwards. The problem, as it has now reappeared, quite simply is this. Comsat wants Intelsat to be run by its Board of Governors. (The board is to be composed of representatives of the tele-