NEW WORLD

All Change at the Top

from our Washington Staff

Dr Lee DuBridge, Science Adviser to the President for the past few years, startled the establishment last Thursday with the announcement of his resignation from the end of August. He will be succeeded by Dr Edward E. David, a computer engineer from the Bell Telephone Laboratories. Dr DuBridge's departure from the White House will be accompanied by other important changes. At the National Science Foundation, the post of deputy director has at last been filled, again by an engineer—Professor Raymond L. Bisplinghoff, dean of the school of engineering at MIT. In the past few days it has become known that the successor to Representative Emilio Q. Daddario, chairman of the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Development, in the House of Representatives, will be Mr John W. Davies, the most senior of the six Democrats on the subcommittee.

The departure of Dr DuBridge will have the most immediate effect. He said last week that he had always had "a horror of staying at any job past reasonable retirement age". There is no doubt of the affection with which he is held in Washington, where he has been highly respected. It is also widely appreciated that the best time in which to be Science Adviser to the President is when expenditure on research and development is growing quickly, for then there is a good chance that the extra funds will be supposed to have been conjured up by the Science Adviser himself. From this point of view, Dr DuBridge has been unlucky, but his spell in office has also been marred by the muddle over the effects of the Mansfield Amendment on the pattern of federal research expenditure—effects that could have been anticipated. At the end of last week, Senator Mansfield went out of his way to emphasise that he had no personal quarrel with Dr DuBridge on this score.

Dr David is a Bell Labs man to the core. He moved there from MIT in 1950 and worked for more than a decade on underwater acoustics. Since then he has been engaged on computing science and has also played an important part in developing the high school curriculum intended to introduce young people to a sense of the importance of technology.

The appointment of Professor Bisplinghoff as deputy director of the NSF also raises new problems, for the post that he will occupy was only created two years ago and has not previously been filled. In an attempt to strengthen the foundation's hand in the Administration, Congress argued that it should have a deputy director and four assistant directors all of them appointed by the President. The four assistant directors are already at work (see *Nature*, **226**, 105; 1970) and no doubt the deputy director would also by now have been at work for some time if the first choice for the post, Professor George Hammond, of the California Institute of Technology, had not blotted his copybook in June by speaking out against the Cambodian operation. There remains, however, some confusion about the precise function of the men now serving as assistants and deputy directors. With the National Science Board brooding over the foundation's work, does it really need six highly paid administrators to spend a mere $500 million?

Dr Bisplinghoff has a NASA background, having been associate administrator for advanced research and technology from 1963 to 1965 and special assistant to the then administrator, Mr James Webb, for a further two years. More recently, Dr Bisplinghoff has been the chairman of a working party intended to advise the Administration on supersonic air transports. He is known to take the line that the SST would be a fine thing if its noise could be kept within bounds.

In the long run, the appointment of Representative Davies as chairman of the subcommittee on Science, Research and Development may turn out to be the most important of all the changes. Mr Daddario has for several years exercised a powerful influence on science policy, chiefly by making himself one of the few people

No Budget Yet

The National Science Foundation is one of several agencies whose budgets for the current year have been snatched away by the President's veto on August 11 of the independent offices. On the same date, President Nixon also vetoed appropriations for the Office of Education. Both bills between them included roughly $1,000 million for work not originally spelled out in the Administration's budget—$453 million extra for education and $451 million extra for the independent agencies. Although the National Science Foundation stood to gain $9·6 million above the Administration's request for $513 million, what seems to have stuck in the Administration's throat is the extra $300 million appropriated by Congress for urban development. The next step will be for Congress to devise a more acceptable bill and there is a chance that this will find its way through Congress in the next few weeks.