to solar physics, a decision to scrap the programme would be fiercely resisted by the solar physics community. Solar physicists have already been instrumental in resurrecting the programme once—when NASA's budget request was being prepared last year, the OSO programme was in danger of being terminated but a flood of letters and telegrams kept OSO-I alive and the other two still a possibility—and Dr Oertel said last week that interest in the satellite has not changed in the meantime. NASA officials will also have to bear in mind the fact that one of the chief experiments on the satellite is being financed by the French government, and that users groups are already being set up to plan experiments and share the data from the satellite. The groups include scientists from the USSR and other European countries.

Dr Elmo Bruner, of the University of Colorado, who is chief scientist for one of the main experiments aboard OSO-I, said last week that if the satellite is scrapped, it will be a "very, very serious loss to solar physics". Pointing out that OSO-I will probably terminate the OSO programme, Dr Bruner said that the satellite represents "the culmination of experiments on the sun up till now".

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

A Friend in the Senate

by our Washington Correspondent

SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY, who has quietly adopted Emilio Q. Daddario's former role as friend for science on Capitol Hill, last week provided ample evidence of his friendship by recommending that the budget for the National Science Foundation in 1973 should be $94 million greater than the Administration has requested. The suggestion is embodied in a bill which Kennedy introduced into the Senate last week that would give the Foundation a budget of $740 million in 1973, most of the increase going to the NSF's applied research and education programmes.

The importance of the bill is that Kennedy is chairman of the Senate subcommittee which sets authorization levels for the National Science Foundation, and since the bill is cosponsored by four other members of his subcommittee, it is likely to form the basis of the subcommittee's recommendations for the foundation's budget for 1973. Kennedy has tentatively scheduled hearings on the bill for the first week in May.

Although the House and Senate authorizations committees are the least powerful of the four committees which deal with the NSF budget request—they merely set upper spending limits, while the appropriations committees recommend how much money Congress should actually make available—they are important for shaping the direction of the Foundation's activities and for conveying to the foundation the feelings of those members of Congress who bother to take an interest in everyday science affairs. As far as Kennedy is concerned, the message to the Foundation is loud and clear: it should not turn its back on supporting graduate students, it should increase its involvement in other educational activities, and it should also spend more on its programme of Research Applied to National Needs (RANN).

In detail, Kennedy's bill would give the Foundation an extra $56.2 million for its education programmes, $16.5 million for RANN, $9 million for a programme designed to assist state and local governments to strengthen their scientific activities, and modest increases in funding for basic science. The increase in support for education programmes would be split in the ratio of $18 million for institutional grants, $17.8 million for graduate student support and $20.4 million for other science education improvement activities. As for the RANN programme, Kennedy is recommending increases of $12.6 million for energy research and $3.9 million for earthquake engineering.

Kennedy's companion committee in the House of Representatives has also recommended increases in the NSF's support of science education and of graduate students (see *Nature*, **236**, 258 ; 1972), although its suggestions are much more modest. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the authorizations in the last week of April.

BIODIPLOMACY

Pandas from Peking

THE top secret security operation that brought two giant pandas to Washington at the crack of dawn on April 16 erupted in a blaze of publicity four days later when Mrs Patricia Nixon, the President's wife, formally accepted them as a gift from the Peking Revolutionary Committee. These two specimens of *Ailuropoda melanoleuca* have assumed more than zoological importance, for they have come to the National Zoo as symbols of the new-found trans-Pacific friendship. Presenting the beasts to Mrs Nixon, Mr Ting Hung, head of Peking's Bureau of Public Service, also offered greetings to the American people.

Rumours that the female, Ling-Ling, was nineteen years old, thus establishing a longevity record for giant pandas, were quashed by the announcement that both she and the male, Hsing-Hsing, are a mere eighteen months old. This news should bring joy to the hearts of conservationists who see in the Chinese gift the opportunity to replenish the giant pandas of the western world. Until last week's arrival in Washington the only remaining examples of the species outside China were the ageing Chi Chi in London and An An in Moscow, both supplied by Peking in the late 1950s. (Chi Chi is in any case at death's door.) After unsuccessful attempts to mate them in 1966 and 1968, despairing zoologists were forced to resign the study of this species and its mating habits to their counterparts in Peking. They of course had access to the only remaining wild giant pandas, and seemed unlikely to relinquish any of them.

Ling-Ling the giant panda breaking off bamboo shoots in her new home at the National Zoological Park in Washington DC. (Photograph: Smithsonian Institution, negative No. 72-4365.)

The United States has not had a giant panda since 1951, and so the arrival of two healthy young specimens is welcomed by representatives of the World Wildlife Fund as well as by the politicians who see the operation merely in terms of top level diplomacy. Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing have arrived at such short notice that their new quarters are not ready, but a new cage is being built, and they will eventually have about an acre of ground which is intended to resemble their natural habitat. When these outdoor quarters are completed the two animals will meet for the first time, and within a year or two a great many people will be watching anxiously for signs of mating behaviour. Meanwhile it is to be hoped that Milton the musk ox, sent to Peking with his companion Matilda in a gesture of reciprocation, will recover from the nasal drips and hair loss that set in soon after his arrival.