

NEW WORLD

Senator Kennedy Strengthens His Influence

by our Washington Correspondent

DURING the past four years, Senator Edward M. Kennedy has been quietly amassing considerable influence over science policy in the United States, or at least that part of it which is formulated by Congress. Nearly every item of legislation concerned with science that came before the 92nd Congress, for example, bore his stamp in some form, either because he sponsored or cosponsored it or because it was referred to one of the two subcommittees of which he is chairman. To be sure, he has burned his fingers badly on some bills and failed to get others into law, but without question Kennedy has emerged as the chief advocate for science on Capitol Hill—a position vacated by Emilio Q. Daddario in 1970 when he left Congress to make an unsuccessful bid for the governorship of Connecticut.

Last month, Kennedy's influence over congressional science affairs was increased even further, for he was appointed to the board of the Office of Technology Assessment, and will almost certainly become its first chairman when the board meets in January. Kennedy's chairmanship of the board is prescribed by the fact that the legislation establishing the OTA requires that the first chairman must be a senator, and Kennedy is the highest ranking among the Senate Democratic appointees. (The other members are Senators Ernest F. Hollings, Hubert H. Humphrey, Gordon Allott, Peter H. Dominick and Richard S. Schweiker, and Representatives John W. Davis, Earle Cabell, Mike McCormack, Charles A. Mosher, Charles S. Gubser and James Harvey.)

The chairmanship of the board will give Kennedy many more levers to pull, for all significant items of legislation involving science and technology will be referred to the OTA. Moreover, the board also has the power to initiate studies on its own—an authority which in theory should give a powerful chairman a means of obtaining critical analyses of virtually any scientific issue. The board also has the authority to appoint the director of the OTA and its Advisory Council—appointments which will profoundly affect the workings of the office long after the board has worked out its term. Finally, the first two years of operation of the OTA will in many respects be its most critical, simply because it will be finding its own way. In such a situation, a powerful chairman of the board can put his stamp on policy.

Kennedy's appointment to the board of the OTA is only the latest in a series of appointments which have gradually given him an expanding influence over scientific affairs. The first influential appointment came in 1968, when Kennedy was given the chairmanship of the *ad hoc* subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare set up to examine amendments to the National Science Foundation Act. The amendments, which were in fact sponsored by Kennedy and Daddario, provided for annual authorization hearings to be held by Congress, and in the 90th Congress a permanent subcommittee was set up to oversee the workings of the NSF. Kennedy was given the chairmanship of that committee.

His next scientific power-lever came two years later, when he became chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, following the departure from

Congress of Ralph Yarborough, who lost a Texas primary election. Although the subcommittee has been chiefly concerned with questions of health care delivery, the chairmanship has given Kennedy a strong voice on cancer legislation and other bills concerned with biomedical research.

Has Kennedy been successful in wielding his power over scientific affairs in the 92nd Congress? The answer is yes and no. For one thing, the two chief items of scientific legislation which he sponsored turned out to be less than completely successful. The first was the bill designed to set up a NASA-style agency devoted to finding a cure for cancer, because of which Kennedy incurred the wrath of much of the biomedical community. Kennedy's original plan came to grief after it was passed by the Senate because of the weight of public opinion in favour of keeping cancer research within the National Institutes of Health. His posi-

SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES

More Cracks in the Ice

by our Washington Correspondent

A GROUP of scientists from the Peoples' Republic of China will visit the United States at the end of November, hard on the heels of a party of medical doctors which has just completed a three-week tour of hospitals and medical research institutions. The two groups are the first official visitors to the United States from the Peoples' Republic (apart from the famous table tennis team) since the cold war of the early 1950s, and American scientists are hoping that the two visits will mark the beginning of a fruitful series of exchanges between the two countries.

Although both groups are official guests of the National Academy of Sciences, much of the credit for their visits must go to the Federation of American Scientists, a small but intellectually influential organization of scientists, which lobbies on Capitol Hill for liberal causes such as arms control. The federation's independence from the federal government made it the primary channel for communication with the Chinese Academy of Sciences when the diplomatic ice between the United States and the People's Republic began to crack last year.

A great deal of the spadework for the visit of the Chinese scientists later this month was in fact completed during visits to China by delegations

from the FAS in May and September this year. The visiting Americans then found Chinese scientists uncertain whether the academy is an official organization of the federal government and also concerned about the academy's ties with Taiwan. These fears have evidently been resolved, for the mission of the Peoples' Republic of China to the United Nations last month relayed a joint message to the academy and the federation accepting invitations from both organizations to the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The federation and the academy agreed that the academy should play host to the Chinese visitors because of its experience in dealing with visiting groups of scientists and also because of its larger resources. Dr Jeremy J. Stone, director of the FAS, said last week that he is "happy with the way it has worked out" and that he believes the federation has fulfilled the aims of its charter "to strengthen the international cooperation traditional among scientists and to extend its spirit to a wider field".

The group of Chinese scientists will visit the United States on November 23, after visiting the United Kingdom, Sweden and Canada. It will consist of Pei Shih-chang, biophysicist; Pai Chieh-fu, science administrator; Chang Wen-yu, high energy physicist; Chen Wei-chang, specialist in mechanics; Chien Jen-yuan, polymer chemist; Hu Shih-chuan, biochemist; and Li Fu-sheng, computer technologist.