NEW WORLD

Living with Uncertainty

by our Washington Correspondent

Now that the dust has settled after President Nixon's second veto of the appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor and of Health, Education and Welfare, some officials at the National Institutes of Health are predicting that the veto will not greatly harm their activities, provided they get their final budget sorted out early in the New Year; others are not so optimistic, however, and there is an air of gloom in some quarters over the fact that the institutes will have to live with a small budget at least until the fiscal year is more than half way through. There is little rejoicing in the National Heart and Lung Institute, for example.

On the face of things the National Cancer Institute should be the hardest hit in the NIH by the veto simply because it was set for the biggest increase in both the Administration's budget and in the vetoed bill. Until Congress passes a new bill which is acceptable to the Administration, the NCI will have to be content with the same amount of money as last year—some \$378 million. The Administration's budget for the present fiscal year would have given the institute \$432 million, while the vetoed bill set the budget at \$492 million.

Two factors will help the NCI to survive relatively comfortably until its 1973 budget is sorted out. The first is that the institute received a large budget increase last year which allowed it to start up new programmes and increase fundings of others, so that even at the 1972 budget level the institute cannot complain that it is starved of money. The second is the fact that the institute received a supplemental appropriation of some \$40 million near the end of the 1972 fiscal year. This has reduced the difference between last year's budget level and the Administration's request for this year from about \$90 million (the figure mentioned in last week's article, see *Nature*, 240, 8; 1972) to \$54 million.

Officials at the cancer institute are also hopeful that the effect of the veto will be minimized by the fact that most of their grants and contracts are let during the second half of the fiscal year, when the final budget figures should be available. Mr Calvin Baldwin, Executive Officer of the institute, said last week that he and his colleagues are planning on the assumption that they will finally get at least the money which the Administration requested, so

that although they can now only spend up to the 1972 level, they will have other contracts almost ready to sign as soon as the new appropriations are cleared.

The optimism in the NCI is clearly contingent on the assumption that the budget will be sorted out early in the new year, so that the letting of grants and contracts will not be too badly delayed. It is unlikely, however, that Congress will be able to get a fresh bill out and signed by the President much before mid-February, by which time

more than seven months of the 1973 fiscal year will have gone by.

As for the National Heart and Lung Institute, the Presidential veto will bite fairly deeply because the crusade against diseases of the heart, lungs and blood vessels is lagging about a year behind the crusade against cancer. The NHLI, unlike the National Cancer Institute, does not have a large 1972 budget increase to help tide it over the period of uncertainty until the 1973 budget is worked out and it now has programmes awaiting funds. The 1972

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Accord with Poland

by our Washington Correspondent

THE governments of the United States and Poland last week signed a broad agreement on cooperation in science and technology. Although it lacks a commitment from either government to spend money or to undertake definite programmes, the agreement is a significant development in the growing *rapprochement* between the United States and Eastern Europe on scientific affairs. It is also yet more fruit from President Nixon's globe-trotting during the past year.

The agreement provides for joint research and development projects between institutions in the two countries, the sharing of results and data from scientific studies, the exchange of scientists and other specialists between institutions and the organization of joint courses, symposia and conferences. In other words, the agreement broadens the scope of present cooperation in science and technology between the two countries, elevating it from the level of *ad hoc* arrangements between institutions to a formal agreement between the two governments. There is provision for periodic review "at a senior level" of activities carried out under the agreement but, unlike the science agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, there is no provision for review and planning by a joint commission.

Cooperation between the United States and Poland on science and technology projects first started some ten years ago. Initially, three government agencies—the Departments of Agriculture and of Health, Education and Welfare and the Smithsonian Institution—were involved in collaborative projects,

chiefly in the fields of agriculture and medical sciences. But last year the Departments of the Interior and of Transportation, the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Bureau of Standards joined the list of individual government agencies in the United States that are forging scientific links with Polish agencies on a host of projects. The US government spent some \$11 million on its share of the projects in the 1972 fiscal year—about double the expenditure level of previous years. Non-governmental scientific institutions and universities in both countries have also played their part in formal and informal cooperative ventures.

Whether these *ad hoc* ventures will be broadened and expanded by the agreement signed last week remains to be seen, but one effect of the new accord may be progress towards similar agreements between the United States and other East European governments. Apart from the major agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, last week's treaty was the first to be signed at governmental level with an East European country. On July 7, however, an interagency agreement was signed between the National Science Foundation and the Institute for Cultural Relations of the Hungarian Peoples Republic, and the United States and Hungarian governments are in preliminary negotiations for an agreement encompassing science, technology, culture and trade.

Meanwhile, the first meeting of the joint US-USSR commission to plan and oversee the workings of the Moscow accord is now expected to take place in Washington some time in December. It was scheduled for October, but preliminary studies were not completed in time.