

example, otherwise it would also have been scrapped now to make the maximum savings. Similarly, hopes are high that the Mariner mission to Jupiter and Saturn will be saved from the axe. But as late as the end of last week, NASA officials were still engaged in hard bargaining with the Office of Management and Budget. At least one project is being dealt with lightly: the space shuttle has had only minor cuts in manpower build-up, and it will certainly go ahead.

SENATE COMMITTEE

No Fight for Space

THE Senate Democratic leadership sprung a surprise last week by appointing Senator Frank E. Moss of Utah to the chairmanship of the Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences. Moss, a widely respected Senator who was first elected in 1958, has never been a member of the committee. Although he has consistently voted in favour of the space programme, he has not shown an unusual amount of interest in space affairs. His appointment came about because none of the members of the committee who were in line for the chairmanship wanted the job.

The chairmanship of the space committee, vacant because of the retirement last year of Senator Clinton P. Anderson, a founder member of the committee, would normally have been passed to Senator Warren Magnuson. Understandably, however, Magnuson preferred to hang on to the chairmanship of the more powerful Commerce Committee, and the offer went to Senator Stuart Symington. But he said last week that his commitments on the Armed Services Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy are more than enough to keep him occupied. The next in line, Senator Howard Cannon of Nevada, has chosen to hang on to his chairmanship of the Rules Committee. Their reluctance to take on the chairmanship of the space committee is a good measure of the decline in the committee's importance.

NIH

Fallout from Marston

by our Washington Correspondent
THE forced resignation of Dr Robert Q. Marston as Director of the National Institutes of Health (see *Nature*, 240, 437; 1972) has sparked off a wave of protests from scientists at NIH itself. The reasons why President Nixon accepted Dr Marston's *pro forma* resignation have not been spelled out and a successor has not yet been nominated, but it is widely felt that Marston's resignation was brought about for political reasons, and that he will be replaced by

someone closer to the Administration. One view is that Dr Marston has paid for not having fought hard enough for the Administration's cancer bill, which would effectively have taken cancer research outside NIH.

The Inter-Assembly Council of the Assemblies of Scientists, which represents professional scientists at NIH, wrote last week to the President to complain that this is the first time that a director of the NIH has been made to resign after a presidential election, to urge that Dr Marston has done a good job and to hope that his successor will be a person of stature in research, not merely an administrator.

AAAS

Genetics, Good or Bad

by our Special Correspondent

THE Youth Council of the AAAS provided some spirited discussion at its December meeting of the legal and

Change at the Top

by our Washington Correspondent

RESIGNATIONS and appointments for natural causes still take place in Washington. Dr Rocco A. Petrone, Director of the Apollo Programme, will become director of the Marshall Spaceflight Center in succession to Dr Eberhard Rees, who retires on January 19, and George Vineyard jun. has been chosen to succeed Dr Maurice Goldhaber as director of the Brookhaven National Laboratory. Dr Goldhaber is returning to full-time research.

The announcement of Rees's retirement and Petrone's appointment was neatly stage-managed to coincide with the end of the Apollo programme, in which both played a significant part. Petrone had directed the programme since September 1969, while the Marshall Spaceflight Center has been responsible for the Saturn Launch vehicle and the development of the Lunar Rover. Rees was deputy director of the center from 1960 until he succeeded Dr Werner Von Braun in 1970.

The new chief at Brookhaven has been deputy director for the past five years. A solid-state physicist, he takes on his new job when Brookhaven is diversifying into such fields as the environmental effects of various types of energy generation. But his chief headache will be the continuing shortage of funds for high-energy physics, particularly in relation to Brookhaven's proposal for a new colliding-beam device.

sociological implications of one branch of science by a symposium on genetics, man and society. Organized jointly with the Yale University Task Force on Genetics and Reproduction, the meeting aired many diverse points of view, not only from the expert members of four inter-disciplinary panels but also from the lively audience.

About half the allotted day was devoted to talk of screening and genetic counselling programmes. Obvious though the advantages of being able to predict before birth that a child will be afflicted with a crippling disease such as muscular dystrophy may seem, there is room for heated argument. For example, the recently introduced requirements of some states and municipalities that members of the black population should be screened for sickle cell anaemia have sparked off great controversy which was reflected in the opinions expressed at the symposium. Thus Dr H. A. Bender, a biologist from the University of Notre Dame, suggested that critics of this programme are foolishly asking for the right not to know about their genetic problems. This, he said, may have incalculable costs but consequences such as harsher insurance rates or diminished opportunities of employment for people whose sickle-cell trait has been detected stem from the failure of scientists to educate the population properly. By contrast, Dr I. Ladimer, a physician and lawyer from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, suggested that the sickle cell anaemia screening programme is unethical so long as there is no really effective therapy available.

On *in vitro* fertilization and the subsequent culture of human oocytes, one view at this meeting was that the technique may be valuable for women who are infertile because their oviducts are blocked. Dr B. G. Brackett, who is engaged in this work at the University of Pennsylvania, felt that in spite of the present technical barriers, it will eventually become possible to implant fertilized ova in such women.

On the question of legislative measures to regulate the use of genetic knowledge, Mr H. Jasper, a legislative assistant to Senator W. F. Mondale, pointed out that probably only four or five senators and even fewer representatives know more about genetics than the lay public. He advocated action now to establish a framework for policy-making, rather than to wait until a disaster prompts the hasty passage of specific and poor legislation. The former course is implicit in Senator Mondale's proposal for a public advisory commission to make a two-year study of the ethical aspects of biology included in the bill he steered through the Senate last year but which eventually died in a House committee room.