

Agency, would absorb the functions of agencies concerned with drug abuse law enforcement, treatment and rehabilitation, research and education. To avoid institutionalizing the drug problem, the commission also recommends that the agency should be disbanded after five years. Such a drastic step is recommended because there is considerable duplication between the various agencies and little effective coordination.

Last year a Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention (SAODAP) was established in the White House to oversee and coordinate the work of the various agencies concerned with treatment, rehabilitation and education programmes. But the commission suggests that the office is at best a stop-gap measure, and it has failed to provide adequate coordination. And, on the law enforcement side, the report gives details of overlap, rivalry and lack of cooperation between the various drug abuse law enforcement agencies.

The Controlled Substances Agency would distribute and monitor grants to states for treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, education and law enforcement programmes, it would develop and implement a general research plan, it would evaluate ongoing programmes and it would provide a data bank for policy planning. Like the AEC, the head of the agency would be a sub-cabinet official who would report directly to the President.

But the proposal has little chance of being adopted. For one thing, Senator Jacob Javits and Senator Harold Hughes, the two Senate appointees on the commission, both dissented from the recommendation because they believe that the Special Action Office has not yet been given a chance to show its mettle. Their lack of support probably precludes passage of legislation by Congress to set up such an agency. More important, a few hours after the commission's report was made public, a White House press spokesman announced that President Nixon will soon send Congress a reorganization plan to amalgamate all the drug abuse law enforcement agencies into a single agency within the Department of Justice. Although that would fit in with the commission's desire to coordinate law enforcement activities, it leaves aside the treatment, information and research activities. But the reorganization would neatly cut the ground from under the commission's feet.

In sum, the commission's report is likely to find that its chief impact will stem not from its recommendations but from its appeal for a more rational approach from its low-key assessments of prevailing attitudes as well as from the emergence of such radical suggestions from such a relatively conservative body.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Cooperation Begins

by our Washington Correspondent

COOPERATION between the United States and the Soviet Union on a number of scientific projects, promised in an agreement signed during President Nixon's visit to Moscow nearly a year ago, finally got under way last week. The US-USSR Joint Commission on Scientific and Technical Cooperation, set up by the Moscow agreement (see *Nature*, 237, 247; 1972), held its first meeting in Washington and approved about twenty-five specific joint projects. Although the projects nearly all involve applied science and will ultimately be of benefit to industry, many of them will be carried out in universities. Approval was also given for Soviet participation in the US Deep Sea drilling Project (see page 289).

In addition to approving projects, the Joint Commission also designated specific individuals in each country to organize and coordinate the work involved in each project; and drew up guidelines for financing them. No funding levels have, however, been proposed.

In addition to the general agreement on scientific and technical cooperation, agreements on health research, environmental science and space research were also signed in Moscow last May. These other specific agreements have already produced results—putative human cancer viruses and drugs have been exchanged, a list of projects in environmental science has been agreed to, planning is progressing well on the joint Apollo-Soyuz docking mission and there has been much East-West travel by scientists and officials. And now that the Joint Commission has finally met—its first meeting has been put back several times since it was first due to take place last October—it is hoped that this new scientific detente will be extended to cover a number of new areas.

The commission agreed to proposals for joint research and development in six chief areas: energy research and development, application of computers to management, agricultural research, microbiological synthesis, chemical catalysis and water resources. The industrial bent of most of the projects is evident from the following examples in each area:

- In energy research, the commission decided to concentrate on five areas—electric power systems and transmission lines, including superconducting transmission, magnetohydrodynamics and solar and geothermal energy. Last year, when the agreement was first signed, thermonuclear research was widely canvassed as a possibility for joint coopera-

tion, but has since been dropped, possibly for security reasons.

- Systems analysis, the use of computers for managing large cities, econometric modelling and the design of software were agreed to as projects for cooperation in the field of the application of computers to management. Dr H. Guyford Stever, director of the National Science Foundation and the US co-chairman of the commission, said last week that strategic products which are embargoed for export from the United States to the Soviet Union, which includes computers, were not discussed.

- In agricultural research, crop breeding and protection, increased production of farm animals and poultry and the mechanization of agricultural production were agreed as priority areas.

- On water resources, the commission approved four projects for immediate implementation—water resource planning, cold weather construction techniques, automation and remote control of water resource systems, and the use of plastics in construction.

- In the area of chemical catalysis, the commission approved five projects, including the application of catalysis to life support systems for possible use in space exploration and the use of catalysis for environment control—the use of catalytic converters for reducing harmful emissions from automobile exhausts, for example.

- Finally, on microbiological synthesis, the commission decided that a group of scientists from the United States should visit the Soviet Union before priority areas were defined.

Short Notes

Honing the Knife

ALTHOUGH Senator William Proxmire's views on economy in federal spending are by now well known, his utterances on the space budget bear especially close watching this year because he has recently been made chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee which deals with NASA's budget. Proxmire has now suggested that the agency's proposed budget for 1974 should be cut by a further \$500 million, chiefly by scrapping the shuttle and stretching out the Skylab programme. The suggestion formed part of a counter-budget in which Proxmire outlined reductions of more than \$4,000 million in President Nixon's spending proposals for 1974, chiefly by taking the axe to several programmes of the Department of Defense. Apart from the shuttle and Skylab, Proxmire suggests that "additional savings could be made in a much more vigorous effort to substitute unmanned for manned space efforts".