

HEW

Budget Blues

ANOTHER senior official of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is expected to be appointed soon to a key position in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, according to sources in the Administration. He is Mr Jack Young, at present Deputy Associate Director of OMB for Energy and Science, whose jurisdiction includes NASA, the Atomic Energy Commission, the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Mr Young is in line for the post of Comptroller of HEW, a position which will put his hand on the Department's purse-strings and which will put him at the centre of the economy drive which is now taking place in the department.

A widely respected administrator, Young is expected to replace James B. Cardwell, the present Comptroller, whose nomination to the post of Commissioner for Social Security is awaiting Senate confirmation. The top two positions in HEW are already occupied by former OMB officials—Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of HEW, was Director of OMB and Undersecretary Frank Carlucci moved to the department from the post of Associate Director of OMB—and Young's appointment is sure to add fuel to the complaint that the department is being placed in the control of White House managers who have a brief to put a brake on its expenditures. Last week, for example, Mr Weinberger decreed a 75% cut in HEW public relations budgets and last month he announced that he has scrapped 119 of the department's 392 advisory committees. To say nothing of the fact that President Nixon twice vetoed HEW appropriations bills when Mr Weinberger was Director of OMB.

SAKHAROV

Academy Protests

by our Washington Correspondent

THE United States National Academy of Sciences has sent a sharp warning to authorities in the Soviet Union that further harassment of Andrei D. Sakharov could harm the growing scientific accord between the two countries. The warning came in a telegram and a longer message sent at the weekend by Dr Philip Handler,

NAS President, to Mtislav V. Keldysh, President of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. The telegram said, in part, that 'harrassment or detention of Sakharov will have severe effects upon the relationships between scientific communities of the United States and the USSR and could vitiate our recent efforts towards increasing scientific interchange and cooperation'.

Sakharov, who has been in trouble with Soviet authorities for his criticisms of Soviet society which have appeared in the western press, was elected a foreign member of the United States National Academy of Sciences in April this year. He has been officially warned by the Deputy General Procurator about his activities and at the end of August a letter signed by 40 members of the USSR Academy of Sciences, attacking his views, was published in *Pravda* (see *Nature*, 245, 2, 1973).

The NAS protest says that "It was with consternation and a sense of shame that we learned of the expression of censure of Sakharov's contributions to the cause of continuing human progress that was signed by 40 members of your academy". The message says that the attack "revives memories of the failure of our own scientific community to protect the late J. R. Oppenheimer from political attack. The case of Andrei Sakharov, however, is far more painful for the fact that some of our Soviet colleagues and fellow scientists are among the principal attackers when one of the scientific community courageously defends the application of the scientific ethos to human affairs".

In the past year or so, a number of scientific agreements have been signed between the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the level of interchange between Soviet and American scientists is perhaps greater now than ever before. The NAS message warns, however, that "were Sakharov to be deprived of his opportunity to serve the Soviet people and humanity, it would be extremely difficult to imagine successful fulfilment of American pledges of binational scientific cooperation, the implementation of which is entirely dependent on the voluntary effort and goodwill of our individual scientists and scientific institutions".

The academy's protest was drawn up by the executive committee and telephoned to those members of the NAS council who could be reached. None opposed it. It was not, however, cleared with the State Department or the White House, and stands in marked contrast to the official United States Government position of "no comment". Dr Henry Kissinger, the Secretary Designate of State, said last week during hearings on his confirmation, that although he is "certainly dismayed by the

conditions that Academician Sakharov reports", the United States Government should not meddle in the domestic affairs of the Soviet Union.

Asked for his views on the protest this week Dr H. Guyford Stever, Director of the National Science Foundation and Chairman of the Joint Commission which oversees the implementation of the joint US-USSR scientific agreements, said that he is sure that the joint programmes will go ahead because of their importance to world peace.

ENERGY

Misplaced Attack

IT is a familiar tactic in American politics for the President to rebuke Congress for dragging its feet on legislation proposed by the Administration. But last week, President Nixon added a fresh twist to the ritual—he accused Congress of failing to act on an Administration proposal which has not even been submitted. Congress, he said during his press conference, has not yet acted on seven major proposals for dealing with the energy crisis, "including, for example, research and development in the field of coal and other areas". The fact is, however, that although President Nixon announced in June, as part of his latest pronouncement on energy policy, that he would seek an extra \$100 million this year for energy research and development—about half of it for coal research—no such proposal has been sent to Capitol Hill.

The situation was even further confused earlier this week, when President Nixon sent a State of the Union message to Congress outlining the Bills on which he wants swift action. Acknowledging that he had recently announced plans for a federal programme of research on new energy sources, costing \$10,000 million over the next five years, President Nixon said "No legislative action is needed by the Congress this year to provide funding, but it will be necessary for the Congress to approve such funding in the years ahead". The original plan, however, was to start the five-year programme in the 1975 fiscal year, but to add an extra \$100 million to this year's budget to get things started. Asked to clarify the situation, an official of the Office of Management and Budget could offer no explanation, but confirmed that no supplemental appropriations bill was being drawn up. Somewhere, however, \$100 million has been lost.