

THE abrupt departure last week of Dr John Sawhill as head of the Federal Energy Administration (FEA) came as no surprise to those who have been keeping track of the jockeying for power and political backstabbing which has characterised energy planning in the United States for the past 18 months. Sawhill, after all, had been in the job for six months, which is longer than anybody else managed to survive, and although he was generally regarded as an effective administrator who won praise from Congress and consumer organisations, he has trodden on a good many important toes recently.

His resignation—which can be described as forced rather than voluntary—paved the way for the appointment of Andrew E. Gibson as the new administrator of the FEA. Gibson's background is not in energy policy but in maritime affairs—he is a former Maritime Administrator and Assistant Secretary of Commerce—but that is not surprising since relevant experience has rarely been a criterion for appointment to a top energy job in either the Nixon or Ford Administrations.

To put last week's events in context, it is instructive to examine some of the bureaucratic musical chairs which have been taking place in energy policy since April last year. At that time John Ehrlichman was nominally in charge of energy planning in his capacity as Chairman of the Domestic Council, but when he became otherwise engaged Nixon created a National Energy Office to advise on policy.

That arrangement lasted only a few weeks before Nixon scrapped it and formed an Energy Policy Office in the White House to coordinate energy programmes. He persuaded John Love to resign as Governor of Colorado to come to Washington as the new energy czar and DiBona was retained as a consultant.

Love's reign lasted only until October, when Nixon announced yet another reorganisation which entailed scrapping the Energy Policy Office and creating a Federal Energy Office, a more powerful body with a large staff and a mandate to develop energy policies and to carry out day-to-day operations. William Simon, a spectacularly successful Wall Street investor who was then Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, was named as head of the office and Love, embittered by his shoddy treatment, returned to Colorado where he is now practising law. DiBona also departed to become executive director of the petroleum industry's chief lobbying office. The Federal Energy Office's name was later changed to the Federal Energy Administration when Congress sanc-

tioned its appearance on the Washington landscape.

In April this year, Simon became Secretary of the Treasury following the departure of George Shultz from the government, and Sawhill, who was Simon's deputy, was promoted to head the agency. But it is important to note that Simon retained a lever on energy planning because he hung on to the chairmanship of an inter-agency co-ordinating committee which consisted



## Washington seen

by Colin Norman

of top officials of government agencies carrying out energy programmes.

All that was changed by President Ford, however, who last month created an Energy Resources Council as the overall manager of the federal government's energy policies and named his old Congressional friend Rogers C. B. Morton, the Secretary of the Interior, as its chairman. That put Morton firmly in charge (he also retains his job as Secretary of the Interior) and higher in the energy bureaucracy than Sawhill and Simon. Since the two are said to be at loggerheads on some issues and since Sawhill recently annoyed White House officials by openly advocating that a 30% tax be slapped on gasoline, Morton forced his resignation.

In view of that chronicle of events, it is small wonder that a coherent energy policy has yet to emerge from the Administration.

● On the same day that Sawhill's resignation was announced, another shuffle of top officials concerned with scientific matters took place in Washington. Robert Seamans, President of the National Academy of Engineering and former Secretary of the Air Force, was named as head of the new Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), Dixy Lee Ray, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), has been appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, and William A. Anders, a former astronaut, has been named as head of the new Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The shuffle is the result of Congressional approval of a

bill to dissolve the AEC and replace it with the ERDA and the NRC.

Seamans, an aeronautical engineer, will take charge of virtually all of the federal government's energy research and development programme, and his appointment has so far been generally welcomed. He faces a tough job, however, in getting the ERDA off the ground since bureaucratic jealousies are sure to arise when programmes are shifted from existing federal agencies into the new organisation. And, since the ERDA will be built around the laboratories of the Atomic Energy Commission, he will be faced with the difficult task of striking a balance between nuclear and non-nuclear research.

The appointment of Anders has, however, drawn mixed reaction. As head of the NRC, Anders will be placed in charge of regulating nuclear power plants and ensuring that they meet safety criteria. He has been a Commissioner of the AEC for some 15 months, where his chief responsibility has been to oversee the breeder reactor programme. It is that factor which has drawn some sniping, since the breeder reactor has become one of the chief targets of nuclear critics.

Finally, Dixy Lee Ray has been appointed to fill a newly created post in the State Department. The result of a reorganisation plan dictated by Congress, the position is designed to elevate scientific affairs in the department by bringing them together.

● Two reports published recently by the National Science Foundation (NSF) catalogue a trend of declining federal budgets for science and technology and of declining employment of scientists and engineers by the federal government.

First, in spite of modest increases in spending on science and technology in the past two years, the NSF reports that when inflation is taken into account, the science budget for this year is "below that of any year during the 1965-75 decade." In short, expenditures on research and development have climbed from \$16,800 million in 1973 to \$17,700 million in the financial year 1973-74 and \$19,600 million this year. But, in terms of 1967 dollars, the purchasing power of the science budget has declined from about \$17,500 million in 1967 to about \$13,000 million, the NSF suggests.

Another set of statistics shows that, for only the second time in 20 years, the number of scientists and engineers employed by the government dropped last year. In October 1972, there were 166,700 scientists and engineers on the federal payroll, but a year later the number had declined to 161,500.