

There has been some encouragement for the NASA programme for the development of a nuclear powered rocket (the Nerva programme), and \$39 million is specifically earmarked for this project. The Administration's budget had set aside only \$17 million for Nerva, but even the final appropriation falls short by \$11 million of NASA's original budget request. It seems that NASA originally asked for \$50 million for Nerva for the financial year now begun. But when told by the Office of Management and Budget to reduce its overall budget request, the agency pared some of the costs of the Nerva programme. The Office of Management and Budget then seized the opportunity to remove all the funding for the project, and eventually agreed under strong pressure from NASA to restore \$17 million to keep the project ticking over.

Although the appropriations are not usually broken down into separate figures for each project—only a global sum for research and development, construction and management is given—it seems clear that the conference committee has done well by this shuttle programme. The agency has, to some extent, staked its future on the shuttle, allowing the budget for Nerva and the "grand tour" to be reduced to preserve intact the funding for the shuttle programme, and the Administration's budget request contained \$100 million for the programme for fiscal 1972. In spite of a virulent attack on the programme by forces in the senate led by Walter F. Mondale and in the house by Mrs Bella Abzug, Congress authorized \$115 million for the shuttle. Also in favour with congress is the Skylab programme, which received an extra \$15 million from the authorization committee.

Of the total research and development expenditure authorized by Congress, funding for manned flights is expected to consume some 50.7 per cent—the lowest proportion since 1963—due to the near-completion of the Apollo programme.

NASA's budget for fiscal 1972 represents a decrease of \$14.6 million from last year's funding—a drop which was described by Mr Richard Fulton during the house debate on the final appropriations as financially constraining, and likely to lead to cancellation of several potentially rewarding projects. But this did not appeal to Mrs Abzug, who has been seeking for some time to plunge her knife into the NASA budget. She told the house: "There is sad irony in noting that in the same bill providing a total of \$3,206,324,000—for that department (HUD), there is also provided a larger amount—\$3,271,500,000—for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Few more abject demonstrations of our misplaced priorities could be provided".

HIGHER EDUCATION

Straws in the Wind

THE Senate went off on holiday on August 6 after doing as much as could be expected of it to win friends among university presidents and faculty. The Senate, like the House of Representatives is looking forward to July 1, 1972, when the legislation now in force and which regulates federal assistance for colleges and universities will expire.

If in due course the Senate is able to reach a satisfactory compromise with the House of Representatives, at present more concerned to help institutions than students, and if, at the same time, it proves acceptable to the Administration, many of whose proposals on higher education have been incorporated into the Senate bill, there is at least a chance that college presidents in the mid-seventies will be able to spend more time on education and less on fund-raising than has been their custom in the recent past. It is, therefore, of some importance that the Administration has let it be known that the \$18,000 million that would be spent under the Senate bill in the three years 1972–75 is an "unrealistic" figure and that Senator Warren G. Magnuson, chairman of the Appropriations Committee concerned, has let it be known that the federal budget would not be able to accommodate such a scale of spending "in present circumstances". In fact, what the Senate proposes is a scale of expenditure roughly three times that at present advocated by the Administration, which has just been awarded a total of \$1,340 million in the budget for the current year for higher education.

The novel features of the Senate bill are that students would be paid a small stipend—\$1,400 a year—and that the institutions which they attend would also receive financial support directly from the federal government. There are also provisions in the bill for supplementary grants to poor students, an echo of the proposal put forward by the Administration. The schemes for student loans at present in force or in preparation would be continued, as would schemes for seeking out particularly students especially likely to profit from higher education. It is also planned that there should be a honeypot of \$150 million from which universities and colleges which find themselves in a plight similar to that of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation could be helped out. The Senate has also agreed with the Administration that there should be set up within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare two new agencies to be known as the National Foundation for Post-Secondary Education and the National Institute of Education. It is just possible that academic enthusiasm for the Senate's

action will be moderated, at least in part, by a requirement that students receiving federal support should promise not to use the money for purposes which are not strictly educational. A gallant attempt by Senator Birch Bayh to write into the bill a requirement that women should not be discriminated against in higher education was ruled out of order towards the end of the Senate debate.

On student support, the bill lays down that the basic grant per student shall be either \$1,400 or one half the actual cost of attendance at a university, whichever is the smaller. It is also proposed that the amount of the grant should be reduced by the contribution expected to be made by the student's family, calculated on a sliding scale which has yet to be determined but which takes into account such things as the family income, the number of dependents (particularly those in higher education), the capital assets of the student and his family and such unusual expenses as may be occasioned by medical catastrophes. In general, grants will be valid for no longer than four years, but there are exceptions to cater for five-year courses, for supplementary courses and for circumstances in which the amount of money at the disposal of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare is insufficient to meet the demand. The last provision of the Senate bill is held by its supporters to be a device for making sure that the Administration will not be able to skimp on higher education without damaging the cause of poor students to which it professes to be most deeply attached, but the effectiveness of this strategy, attributed to Senator Claiborne Pell, remains to be seen. It is estimated that the total cost of the basic grant programme, will amount to about \$1,000 million a year.

There are also schemes in the new bill for helping poor and other deserving students. These supplementary grants will be administered by institutions. The Senate bill proposes that something like \$200 million a year will be spent in this way, usually in grants not exceeding \$1,000 (except when a student has performed well in the previous academic year). Supplemental grants of this kind will continue for four years or for the duration of an undergraduate course, whichever is the normal practice of the institution concerned. It will be for universities and colleges to select eligible students, but the federal funds available will be shared out among states in proportion to the numbers of full-time students in higher education. The Senate also suggests that \$50 million a year should be transferred to states prepared to operate a student incentive grant programme.