

NEW WORLD

Functional Organization Makes Trouble

by our Washington Correspondent

A SWEEPING reorganization of the federal government's health services has been set in train by Caspar W. Weinberger, the new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Tighter management control is the watchword, and although some reorganization of HEW's sprawling bureaucracy takes place nearly every year, this particular round of executive musical chairs is of more than passing interest to the scientific community. The chief losers in the shuffle are mental health programmes in general and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in particular.

The nub of the plan is that the Health Services and Mental Health Administration should be dismantled, and that all the health programmes of the federal government should be reorganized into five separate agencies, the heads of which will report directly to Dr Charles C. Edwards, the new Assistant Secretary for Health. NIMH is being transferred almost lock, stock and barrel back into the National Institutes of Health, the agency which housed it until 1967 when NIMH was separated from the other biomedical research institutes and promoted to bureau status.

The five health agencies to be established by the reorganization are as follows:

- The Food and Drug Administration, which will be unchanged.
- The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, which will also be essentially unchanged but which will take on the National Institute for Occupational Safety.
- The National Institutes of Health, which will gain NIMH, but lose the Bureau of Health Manpower Education.
- A new Health Services Administration, which will be concerned with health care delivery.
- A new Health Resources Administration, which will be concerned with health service data gathering and demonstration programmes, and which will also take over the Bureau of Health Manpower Education from NIH.

Harold O. Buzzell, former Deputy Manpower Administrator for the Department of Labor and a management consultant who once worked for Edwards's former employers, Booz, Allen and Hamilton, has been appointed to implement the reorganization and eventually to direct the Health Services Administration.

The objectives of the shuffle are clear:

to reorganize the health bureaucracy along more functional lines and to put the Assistant Secretary of Health in firm control of the federal government's health programmes. In the past, the assistant secretary's lines of control have been rather obscure, and he has often been bypassed on crucial decisions.

What all this means for biomedical research and the National Institutes of Health is a matter of debate, but a clear indication of the way the wind is blowing was given by Mr Weinberger during a briefing for a few reporters before the plan was announced. He was quoted as saying that the reorganization will help to "redress the balance" in research funding. "There has been too much emphasis on investigator-initiated research and not enough on directed research", he is reported to have said, and suggested that more research fund-

ing should be spent on attacking specific diseases such as cancer, and less on basic research.

Concentration on research likely to produce results in the short term at the expense of longer-term studies has become the general trend in research spending across the board in the United States in the past few years, but if Mr Weinberger had intended to antagonize much of the biomedical community, he could hardly have chosen his words more carefully. Already the cancer plan, which has not yet been published, has been bitterly attacked for stifling scientific creativity, and budget cuts which have reduced general research support in every institute in NIH have been attacked for jeopardizing the long-term future of biomedical research in the United States.

In organizational terms, the reorgani-

MARS

Targets for Viking

POSSIBLE landing sites for the Viking mission to Mars in 1976 have finally been chosen by NASA. After a year's intensive study of some 22 possible sites, NASA has chosen Chryse (19.5° N, 34° W) as the prime target for the first lander and Cydonia in the Mare Acidalium (44.3° N, 10° W), as the target for the second lander.

Chryse is situated at the northeast end of the 3,000-mile long, 20,000 feet deep rift valley discovered by Mariner 9, in an area which resembles a drainage basin, and it is expected to contain a variety of deposits of surface material. The first lander will visit the site in June 1976 if all goes well. The second landing site, which will receive another lander a month later, lies at the edge of the southernmost regions of the north

polar hood — a hazy area which may carry moisture. Chryse is thus more interesting geologically, while Cydonia offers the best prospects of any life.

Both sites also lie well below the mean surface of the planet, which is an advantage in two respects. First, the denser atmosphere will provide more efficient braking for the parachutes, and second, the high atmospheric pressure adds to the chances of finding water. Backup sites for each lander are at the same latitudes as the prime sites.

A special advantage of the two prime sites is that both landers will be in communication range of both orbiters, which could enable one orbiter to be released from synchronous orbit for low-altitude study of other regions, while the second orbiter relays information back to Earth from both landers. The sites are tentative, and can be changed by retargeting the spacecraft up to 10 days before encounter.

