NASA deputy head takes MIT posts

By Jay Kunin

NASA's number two executive has resigned to become the Jerome Clarke Hranaker Professor of Astronautical Engineering (Civil) at MIT, Dr Robert C. Seamens Jr., an alumnus of MIT and also a former faculty member who has been deputy administrator of the space agency until January 5.

During the spring term, Professor Seamens will serve in both the Division of Aeronautics and Astronautics and the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management. In addition, he will continue to serve NASA in an advisory capacity.

In announcing the appointment, President Howard Johnson stated, "Dr. Seamens' stature in our family and student body is a productive background in the technology and sciences associated with aerospace engineering and, equally important, a rich understanding of the marshalling of diverse technological resources for the achievement of major national goals."  Budget problems

In an interview Dr. Seamens discussed the present and future plans of NASA. The major problems facing the agency now is the uncertainty in their budget appropriation. Several years ago, NASA's peak budget of about 86 billion, employing 450,000 people. According to Seamens, they expected that as new projects were phased in, the budget would level off at slightly over 85 billion. However, the Vietnam War has taken its toll on the agency's appropriation so that this year's budget amount to a $500 million reduction from last year. Because of this, NASA has cut expenditures of $3.3 billion, and is laying off 4000 employees per month. These figures include people employed by NASA, its contractors, and their subcontractors.

The great concern of the space agency is the fact that much of the President's proposed $89 billion budget cut for fiscal 1969 may come out of NASA's appropriation. Their request was for about $6.4 billion, from which the House has already cut $101 million; the final total may be substantially less. According to Seamens, much of the funding of NASA goes for advanced technological research—such as the electronic research being done at MIT; structures and stabilization at Langley Research Center; and production at Lewis Research Center. His hope is that these programs will not suffer from a budget cut. However, his major concern is with the present booster program which receives 70-75% of the budget. Since we are eight years into the lunar landing program, with less than two years to go, Dr. Seamens stated that any drastic change in the program would be "like changing a pregnancy after eight months.

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