

NEWS IN BRIEF

Stanford president to head Rockefeller Foundation

Dr Richard W Lyman, currently President of Stanford University, California, has been chosen from a field of 1000 nominees to head the Rockefeller Foundation. Dr Lyman has been President of Stanford since 1970, and will leave his post in the summer. He will succeed Dr John H Knowles, who died last March, as President of the Foundation, of which he has been a trustee since 1976. University officials at Stanford will meet next month to discuss the selection of a new president.

US airlines told to restrict ozone intake

TEN years ago, it was a question of whether high flying aircraft would cause permanent damage to the Earth's ozone layer. Now US scientists are concerned that an excess of ozone inside such aircraft could be a hazard to passengers. And the US Federal Aviation Administration has issued rules requiring aircraft to reduce the amount of ozone entering aircraft, based on standards established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Initially proposed in 1978, the new rules will require airlines to screen out most ozone as it enters airline cabins by means of charcoal filters — or to follow routes that avoid areas of high ozone concentrations. On flights of less than four hours the maximum concentration of ozone will be 0.25 parts per million. On longer flights, the average level must be no more than 0.1 parts per million.

Pugwash takes up East-West dialogue

THE informal diplomacy practiced for 25 years by the Pugwash conferences was brought into play on 19-20 January in Geneva to "take up the slack caused by the present suspension of official East-West dialogues". Convened by the Pugwash Executive Committee, thirty three participants from 19 countries including high ranking Soviet and NATO officials met to discuss "the critical nature of current developments and the increasing danger of nuclear confrontation". Described as "useful", the talks included exchanges on the subjects of Afghanistan and the destabilising effects of the NATO nuclear modernisation programme. The participants will continue discussions at another specially convened meeting to be held in mid-April.

In the meantime the British Council of Churches is continuing its campaign against the installation of the latest Polaris missiles on UK submarines (29 November page 435). BCC representatives met with

the Ministry of Defence last week where they raised the question of the military relevance of a UK submarine nuclear threat that would be under NATO, not UK, control. Citing the opinions of Lords Mountbatten and Carver in support, BCC representatives cautioned the Ministry against renewing the Polaris as "a matter of political machismo".

PETRA to boost luminosity by ten

PETRA, the existing 19 GeV on 19 GeV electron storage ring at DESY, Hamburg, will install the last of 60 accelerating cavities in February and so for the first time reach its peak energy. And as the luminosity of storage rings increases rapidly with energy, it is hoped to raise the present 50 per day event rate by a factor of ten. This should make it possible at last to perform the 'forward-backward asymmetry' experiments which should detect the low energy 'tail' of the Z^0 , and bring early indications of the presence of the particle. According to the Weinberg/Salam unified theory of the weak and electromagnetic interactions, the Z^0 (intermediate vector boson) plays the same role in the weak interaction as the photon in the electromagnetic interaction. At 90 GeV, it would be the heaviest particle yet found.

Basques blow up nuclear power plant equipment

MEMBERS of the Basque separatist organisation ETA blew up electrical equipment scheduled for delivery to the troubled Lemoniz power plant near Bilbao last Sunday. A group of armed men captured the factory manager of the Segasa factory in Vittoria at his home, took him to the factory where they disarmed eight guards of their .38 calibre pistols and placed plastic explosive around special batteries intended for the Lemoniz plant. Warning the guards and manager to stay clear of the blast, the men left and the batteries exploded a few minutes later. The action occurred during a weekend of revolutionary violence in which ten people were killed in armed actions throughout the country.

Denmark shelve nuclear power indefinitely

THE Danish government last week announced an indefinite postponement of the introduction of nuclear energy. In a major policy shift, said to be strongly influenced by the accident at Three Mile Island, the ruling Social-Liberals supported by the Single Tax party, two smaller left wing parties and the major

trade unions — who had previously supported nuclear power — decided to defer any parliamentary action on the question.

Citing uncertainties about safety and waste storage, Energy Minister Poul Nielsen pointed out that Denmark was too small to support safely more than five nuclear plants which would only supply 15% of Denmark's energy needs. In its place, development of North Sea gas in conjunction with Norway is expected to cover the major part of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian energy needs well into the next century with enough left over to export to West Germany. The government will now draft a new energy plan that will emphasise, a shift from oil to gas, energy conservation and increased commitment to the development of alternative energy sources.

French researchers protest CNRS reorganisation

FRENCH scientists of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique continued their opposition to management reorganisation plans by holding a one day strike and demonstration last week. More than 1500 research scientists marched through Paris to the offices of the Secretary of State for Research to protest against recent changes in the law which would introduce a new four year probationary period, lower the maximum age for entry to research to 27 years and permit forced mobility at the discretion of research directors. The trade unions representing the researchers sent an open letter to Prime Minister Raymond Barre signed by 1000 scientists including 300 research directors, senior researchers and professors that demanded a suspension of the decrees as measures that "would compromise gravely the future of basic research in France".

SRC clamps down on post-docs

THE UK Science Research Council has instructed its research directors to apply "rigidly" all rules concerning employment of post doctoral research fellows. The orders, contained in a memorandum circulated to SRC research establishments last November will effectively prevent research scientists on post doctoral contracts from gaining extensions or further contract work when their present contracts expire. The SRC defends its policy in ethical terms. Stating that the reasons for the policy were not financial — "very few people will be affected" — an SRC official said "we have a moral responsibility to encourage new ideas. People who have been here six years have had their chance and now they must make way for fresh blood".