science and technology, Mr Barry Jones, have repeatedly said as much.

Perhaps significantly, the present Liberal-Country Party coalition government has responded by increasing support for the Industrial Research and Development Incentives scheme from A\$14 million to A\$50 million. More broadly, the government has taken to justifying a more interventionist approach to Australian industry by references to "market imperfections".

More animal care

Washington

Public pressure for a change in rules governing the care of laboratory animals has prompted the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to tighten up their requirements, whether or not Congress acts on the matter this year.

NIH will require that at least one non-scientist be appointed to each research institution's animal care committee — the groups charged with overseeing the treatment of experimental animals. This echoes one of the requirements in the bill now before Congress. (The bill, renumbered HR 6928, has cleared the House Science and Technology Committee and is now before the health and environment subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee.)

NIH is also planning to mount a series of site visits to check on the extent to which researchers are complying with NIH guidelines. Under current rules, recipients of NIH grants must agree to adhere to the practices outlined in NIH's *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. Failure to do so can result in loss of NIH funding. A major criticism of the system, however, is that too much reliance is placed on the good-faith assurances of the researchers and too little on inspection.

But NIH is not yet ready to order on its own another change in the proposed legislation: the mandatory accreditation of all research institutions by an independent group such as the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animals Care (AAALAC), which sets standards and conducts routine inspections every three years. According to Dr William Raub, NIH's associate director for extramural research, "We think the concept of accreditation makes a lot of sense. But we're not yet, at least, willing to mandate it until we know more about the costs". Universities have claimed that bringing all NIH-supported institutions up to the AAALAC standards would cost \$500 million. The legislation before Congress would eventually require all institutions to meet the AAALAC standards, but would soften the blow by allowing ten years in which to meet this goal.

Stephen Budiansky

Labor is less inhibited about intervention. The July conference undertook that research and development expenditure should increase from the present 0.9 per cent of gross national product to a level "equivalent to that in other technologically advanced countries". Prudently, Labor did not specify a target figure.

What Labor offers is more pragmatic — a promise of a new division in the Department of Science and Technology to be concerned with industrial research, development and innovation. A Labor government would be a dutiful customer for new Australian products, and would back technical innovations with hard cash. It would also provide venture capital for new kinds of industrial developments, in biotechnology for example.

On issues such as these, the parties differ only moderately. Neither will increase

spending on basic research. The best hope is that Labor would not let research funds be eroded by inflation.

Long-standing disagreements persist, however, about the role of foreign corporations in high-technology industries. Labor would require foreign corporations to carry out some research and development in Australia, but Mr Barrie Jones seems well aware that he must find a form of words not so restrictive that foreign corporations will be driven away.

The new Labor policy also promises innovations to give high relief to Australian science. The conference approved a plan for an "Australia Prize" of A\$100,000 for humanitarian scientific achievement, to be administered by the Australian Academy of Science, and an international conference on Antarctic research to reinforce Australia's claim to the largest slice of the Antarctic.

Vimala Sarma

Mexican science in money trouble

Mexico City

In the face of Mexico's present economic crisis, the country's expensive and ambitious programme for science and technology now faces shocking sudden austerity. "A crisis can be good," says Pablo Rudomin, the distinguished neurophysiologist who is president of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. "It leads you to deep thoughts about where you're going. I think it [the crisis] will give us a sense of community. We'll have to work on priorities, and quality and on preserving what we have."

What has happened is that after a decade when the economy was flooded not just with domestic oil revenues but with loans from foreign banks (chiefly in the United States), Mexico has found that it cannot pay the instalments due on its debts, estimated at \$80,000 million. The payments were rescheduled in August, since when the Mexican banks have been nationalized. All sectors of the economy will have to be cut back, but just how will not be known until the new government of President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado takes office on 1 December.

"Things will change, but probably for the good," echoes economist Manuel Gollás, who holds a key political post as head of the advisers to the director general of the Consuejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT), the Mexican science agency. One irony of the boom, he reflects, is that sometimes "we had more money than we did worthwhile projects".

Supported with government oil revenues and announced with a great fanfare at the beginning of President José López Portillo's 6-year term, Mexico's science and to technology programme was designed to strengthen the infrastructure of science and to encourage Mexican self-sufficiency in technical matters. The programme was nothing if not ambitious. Basic research did well, but there were also

special priority programmes in fields such as agriculture and nutrition. The energy programme included work on nuclear and solar energy production. There were schemes for supporting industrial research, and the government had emphasized the importance of training graduate students.

Interviewed in their respective offices in Mexico City, both Rudomin and Gollás acknowledged that the programme had been criticized as being only a shopping list of unrelated projects, reflecting the interests of individuals and government agencies. Indeed, its execution reflected this pattern. CONACYT, which designed

the original programme and serves as the president's science adviser, actually controlled only 11–12 per cent of the total science and technology budget. The government gave the rest directly to universities (the major one being the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, whose main campus is in Mexico City). Money for the Instituto Politécnico Nacional, for example, comes from the Ministry of Education. Private industry and foundations play almost no part in sponsoring Mexican science.

More than half of CONACYT's budget for 1981, estimated at 3,899 million pesos, went for scholarships, another 20–30 per cent for administration, public relations, and publications. Grants for basic science directly to investigators in fact accounted