

federal structure of the University of London by providing its constituent colleges with an account of what the future holds for them (the University of Wales has always been dealt with in this way) is also potentially far-reaching, and could presage the break-up of the university. Imperial College has been able to talk directly to UGC since the early 1960s, but the other member colleges have had to wait on the university court for the reallocation of UGC's grant to the university as a whole. Now that the university has been reorganized into only five general colleges and the number of its medical schools is shrinking by amalgamation, the proof of the case for the continuation of what is widely thought to be an inefficient system will fall to the central organization.

The consequence of last week's letters from UGC which cannot as yet be calculated is the effect of its opinions on student recruitment. All university departments have been categorized on the basis of their research performance as average, below

average and above average, while departments whose research attainment is judged to be of international character are singled out for special mention. UGC has said separately that it will attempt to categorize departments by the quality of their teaching when there are tools available for carrying out that task. Meanwhile, however, it must be expected that students will flock to the departments praised by UGC and will shun the others, which may accelerate the selectivity exercise.

Many academics are complaining that the time remaining between now and the autumn is not sufficient for the implications of UGC's judgement to be grasped. A crucial unknown quantity is whether the new Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, will be able to bring extra funds from the Treasury. Nothing was heard of Baker last week. □

• The grant for 1986-87 for the University of Essex has not been reduced (as reported last week) by 0.5 per cent but, rather, increased by 1.7 per cent.

## Chilean physicians

# Campaign against torture grows

### Philadelphia

CHILEAN physicians are leading a new national movement demanding an end to the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. The Chilean Medical Association (Colegio Medico de Chile, CMC), which has for the past four years been investigating and exposing physicians' cooperation in torture by the security forces, has been joined by 17 other professional organizations in a new national assembly (Asamblea Nacional de la Civilidad) that is calling for immediate national democratic elections. With the expiration last week of the assembly's 31 May deadline for its demands, CMC is likely soon to be at the centre of an escalating series of strikes.

The president of CMC, Dr Juan Luis González, and its general secretary, Dr Francisco Rivas, were in Philadelphia last week at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to receive on behalf of CMC the AAAS award for scientific freedom and responsibility. AAAS has been monitoring human rights in Chile since the early 1980s. The award was shared with Dr Victor Paschkis of the United States, who founded the Society for Social Responsibility in Science.

CMC was honoured for its efforts to track down physicians who cooperated in torture of government prisoners during the 1970s. Some 10,000 civilians, including 80 physicians, were murdered by the secret police or disappeared in the period between 1973 and 1978, and the use of torture is said to have been widespread.

CMC represents 14,000 physicians, more than 90 per cent of Chile's total. It

was run by puppet officers appointed by the government until 1982, when Pinochet gave in to demands for election of officers in order to avoid a showdown with the profession. González and Rivas, who head a council of 23 members, were elected on a three-point platform of solidarity in the profession, peaceful protest against the government's health policies, and investigation of physicians who participate in torture.

As a result of the torture investigations, two physicians, Luis Losada and Manfred



Jurgensen, have been expelled from the association. They admitted examining and certifying as healthy a government prisoner, Frederico Alvarez, who had been tortured and who died a few hours later from respiratory insufficiency due to multiple rib fractures. Two other members of the association accepted suspension for a year for examining a blindfolded

prisoner who was being forced to remain standing, and CMC is continuing investigations of five others.

Rivas suspects that between 70 and 80 CMC members have cooperated in government torture, although in most cases firm evidence is lacking. The association conducts its investigations by examining court records (many of the torture deaths have been examined by the judiciary, although usually to no effect) and by interviewing torture victims or their families. In addition, files left over from the period when CMC was a government organization have provided many clues; the outgoing puppet officials apparently made no attempt to destroy evidence that would help the new CMC council.

Rivas stresses that those under investigation are allowed to retain the lawyer of their choice, at CMC's expense if necessary. Penalties are recommended by CMC's ethics committee and are decided finally by the full 23-member council.

After the most brutal period of Pinochet's rule in the 1970s, there was a lull in political repression in Chile during the early 1980s. But, according to Rivas, the reemergence of organized opposition parties and the end of a temporary economic boom has increased discontent, so that repression is once again on the rise. Recently the Reagan administration has backed away from its policy of "quiet diplomacy" towards Chile, and spokesmen have started to refer to the administration's opposition to dictatorships both of the left and the right.

CMC has already held one and two-day strikes of its members to protest against the government's summary dismissal of the head of Santiago Medical College, Dr Ricardo Vaccare. According to Rivas, a neurosurgeon in private practice whose work for CMC is unpaid, 85 per cent of members supported the strikes. It is therefore not surprising that CMC's activities have attracted the government's unfavourable attentions. Rivas says that CMC officials frequently receive anonymous death threats to themselves and their families and are often shadowed by secret police. In recent months CMC's headquarters in Santiago has been under constant overt police surveillance.

Among the organizations supporting CMC in calling for a return to democratic rule is the National Association of Academics of Chilean Universities. CMC has received expressions of moral support from most major national medical associations, although representatives of governmental organizations such as the World Health Organization have declined to offer their support for fear of compromising their impartiality. But the medical profession has already become a significant political force in Chile. Supported or not, physicians seem determined to make a still larger impact.

**Tim Beardsley**