

included 600 children of black French soldiers and German women in the state of Rhineland, which the French occupied after the First World War.

In 1937, von Verschuer was made an expert to the Research Department on Jewish Questions of the governmental Reich's Institute for the History of the New Germany, whose main role was to research 'world Jewry'.

In this capacity, he wrote to Fischer that it was "important that our race policies, including the Jewish question, develop an objective scientific background that is broadly accepted".

The historians have not yet been able to show whether Nobel laureate Adolf Butenandt, director of the KWI for Biochemistry in Berlin and a postwar president of the MPS, allowed blood samples from Auschwitz to be analysed at his institute (see *Nature* 403, 474–475; 2000). But they argue that it is unlikely that he did not know about the work being done under his directorship.

The historians have so far focused on four institutes. Three of these were considered biological; the fourth was the KWI for Metal Research in Stuttgart.

It is not known whether Nazi sympathies were the exception or the rule among scientists, says Carola Sachse, the research group's head. ■



Close ties: Max Planck (centre) at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Metal Research in 1935.

US court slashes damages in polymerase- β theft case

Rex Dalton, San Diego

How much is academic research worth? For lab work that took nearly three years and produced papers in *Science* and *Biochemistry* the value is one US dollar, according to a California appeals court.

The ruling covers a lengthy battle over research on the rat DNA enzyme polymerase- β , which was taken by La Jolla-based drugs company Agouron Pharmaceuticals from a federally funded laboratory at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD).

Last month, the state appeals court in San Diego upheld a 1998 jury verdict that in 1992 Michelle McTigue and her husband Jay Davies, both of Agouron, stole key elements of crystallography research from Huguette Pelletier, then a postdoc at UCSD (see *Nature* 393, 504; 1998). But the court reduced the jury's \$200,000 award to Pelletier to \$1, ruling she had not proved any damage.

Formerly a crystallographer at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, Pelletier left science last year, largely in frustration over the incident. She now works for a Los Angeles community-service organization.

The decision highlights the dilemma faced by university scientists trying to protect their research from the representatives of biotech companies who walk round university labs seeking leads to develop into products.

Pelletier will appeal to the California Supreme Court against last month's verdict. She hopes to create a legal precedent affirming the value of academic research.

She has written to the Bruce Alberts, the president of the National Academy of Sciences, asking him to file documents with the California Supreme Court on the value of academic research and the damage caused by scientific misconduct. ■



Pelletier: will appeal against the verdict.

"It is difficult under existing laws to place a dollar value" on research such as Pelletier's, says her attorney, Daniel MacLeod. The \$200,000 originally awarded was based on a year's grant from the National Institutes of Health, which funded the lab where she worked at UCSD.

Academic scientists who are victims of this sort of practice have to seek redress under laws designed

for misappropriation of commercial and patented data, MacLeod says. And as the reward system for academic researchers involves a range of factors, including publication and academic promotion, he adds, it is difficult to demonstrate damage.

Mike Varney, vice-president for research at Agouron, now owned by the drugs company Pfizer, issued a statement saying that the company "continue[s] to fully support the integrity of our scientists and the appropriateness of their conduct."

Pelletier filed her lawsuit in 1994. She contended that McTigue, a former doctoral student at UCSD, used her access to the university to secure techniques on crystallography on rat polymerase- β . These were then given to Davies for his Agouron project to try to develop a cancer medication from the enzyme, which repairs DNA.

The project was eventually abandoned. But Davies, McTigue and others used the data for the first publication of the rat polymerase- β crystal, which appeared in *Cell* in 1994. Pelletier's work on polymerase- β was later published in *Science* and *Biochemistry*. ■

Canada plans reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions

David Spurgeon, Montreal

A month before the next large intergovernmental meeting on climate change, to take place in The Hague in the Netherlands, the Canadian government has announced that it will cut emissions of greenhouse gases by about 65 million tonnes per year over the next five years. This would take it one-third of the way towards the target agreed at the previous climate meeting in Kyoto.

The government will spend up to Can\$500 million (US\$330 million) on cutting emissions from transport, energy

production, industry, buildings, forestry and agriculture, international projects, technology and science. Together these activities account for more than 90% of the total.

Since 1995, Canada has spent Can\$850 million on climate change, but its greenhouse-gas emissions have continued to rise. An Environment Canada report found that they were 13% higher in 1998 than in 1990.

Canada's Kyoto target is to cut the 1990 figure by 6% by 2008–12. According to the government figures, this will mean a

reduction of some 200 million tonnes.

Canada's "Action Plan 2000 on Climate Change" promises that the government will buy as much as 20% of its electricity from renewable sources such as wind and solar power. It also includes incentives to stimulate sales of renewable energy and a tripling of the amount of ethanol the country produces annually.

The plan will be taken to a meeting with the provinces later this month in Quebec City in an attempt to convince them to make similar commitments in advance of the meeting in The Hague. ■