

NEWS AND VIEWS

Ructions in California

DR. CLARK KERR, the President of the University of California dismissed by the Board of Regents on January 19, has been associated with the university for 22 years and president since 1958. His dismissal by a majority of 14 to 8 came at the end of a week of discussions within the Board of Regents of the proposals put forward by the new Governor, Mr. Ronald Reagan, for a contribution by students to tuition fees at the nine campuses of the university. The dismissal seems to have been something of a surprise, for there had earlier been rumours that a compromise would be reached between those in favour of a tuition levy and those resisting the proposal at least for the academic year beginning in 1967.

The crisis at the university has come at the end of a decade in which the university has multiplied its size by a factor of nearly four. In the current year, the running cost of its operation will be \$730 million, while new plant and equipment will cost \$145 million. (In strictly financial terms, therefore, the University of California is bigger than all the universities of the United Kingdom put together.) In practice, the State of California contributes just under a half of the cost of keeping the university going. The federal government is almost equally important as a source of funds, largely through research contracts with university departments. Altogether the university has 87,000 students, with nearly 30,000 of them on the campus at Berkeley which has been the recipient of a great deal of Mr. Reagan's vituperation against the university both in the month before his election in November last year and in the weeks since his coming to office at the beginning of January this year. Mr. Reagan has frequently referred to the events in 1964 when students complained against the university administration of lack of freedom and when outside critics of the university complained that students were given too much licence. The present dispute has come to a head, however, because of Mr. Reagan's determination to reduce the contribution of the State of California to the running of the university by an amount reported to be equivalent to ten per cent.

The immediate reaction at the university has been to suggest to some heads of departments that uncertainty about the future of the university may make it easier for other universities to tempt away members of the faculties of the nine campuses at California. As yet there is no news of a successor to Dr. Kerr, and at this stage no assurance that this appointment will be made from among the nine chancellors who serve as heads of the individual campuses of the university.

Committee at Last

NEARLY three months after his first announcement on October 25, the Prime Minister was able to tell the

House of Commons on January 17 of the composition of the Central Advisory Council for Science and Technology under Sir Solly Zuckerman. The Prime Minister said that the members would be: Sir Eric Ashby, Master of Clare College, Cambridge; Sir Harrie Massey, Professor of Physics at University College London and Chairman of the Council for Scientific Policy; Sir Hugh Tait, managing director of Esso Petroleum Co. Ltd.; Professor P. M. S. Blackett, Deputy Chairman of the Advisory Council on Technology and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Technology; Professor A. B. Pippard, Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge; Professor B. R. Williams, Professor of Economics at the University of Lancaster and an adviser to the Ministry of Technology; Dr. A. H. Cottrell, Chief Scientific Adviser (Studies) to the Ministry of Technology; Dr. F. S. Dainton, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nottingham; Dr. F. E. Jones, managing director of Mullard Limited; Mr. F. Cousins, General Secretary, Transport and General Workers Union and Minister of Technology 1964-66; and Mr. R. D. Young, Alfred Herbert Limited. The Prime Minister said that the terms of reference of the council are to advise the government "on the most effective national strategy for the use and development of our scientific and technological resources."

The strength of the new committee is widely acknowledged and held to be an assurance that it will be on the side of the angels. The Council for Scientific Policy, which at one point seemed to be in danger of being overshadowed by the new council, is strongly represented, principally through Sir Harrie Massey. However, Dr. Dainton, Dr. F. E. Jones and Professor Blackett are all members of the Council for Scientific Policy. The presence of Mr. Frank Cousins on the committee is at first sight a surprise, although Mr. Cousins was a member of the council of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research between 1962 and 1964. The interests of the Ministry of Defence are represented by Dr. Cottrell. In the formal announcement of the committee, no reference is made to the way in which the Royal Society was originally asked to appoint a representative although, of course, Professor Blackett is also President of the Royal Society. Apparently the original intention that the council should function on a confidential basis has not been changed, although it is considered that the council will be accessible to the Select Committee on Science and Technology being formed in the House of Commons. It is considered that the new committee will begin work on attempts to secure a more effective distribution of skilled manpower within government and other public laboratories. Its hardest task is bound to be the better articulation of civil and defence research.

Reservoirs in the Sea

THE United Kingdom is likely to be short of water within one or two decades. One possible solution to the problem is to build barrages across estuaries and bays, turning them into reservoirs. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government appointed consultants to investigate the feasibility of two such schemes, across Morecambe Bay and Solway, and the consultants' reports have now been published (H.M.S.O., *Morecambe Bay*, £1 2s. 6d.; *Solway*, 16s.; *Report*, 10s. 6d.).