In the long run, a more intimate involvement of social scientists in the foundations of the economy could serve not merely to reach more accurate decisions about the management of the economy but also to suggest a greater wealth of actions which might be taken. It may be something of a triumph that in the debate this week the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to mention the word "devaluation" in public without pretending that all holders of sterling would turn their money into any other currency on offer, but this is only a modest relaxation. Why does he not also take up in public the arguments one way and the other for the maintenance of sterling as an international currency? And why does not his colleague, Mr Patrick Gordon Walker, take the edge off his fears that people on the margin between poverty and prosperity might be tempted not to work if welfare benefits were too generous by considering the potential advantages of a statutory minimum wage? Indeed, there is a good case for going even further and asking whether the British Government could not create the mobile labour force for which it is always crying out by making paymen s of actual money to people who change their jobs. Another possibility is that removal expenses might qualify tfor deduction of income tax, and there is of course a host of other possibilities all equally at odds with the conventions now followed. The difficulty in all this is that, in the absence of a detailed understanding of how the economy functions, the conventions are indispensable. They have become not safeguards but crutches.

MORE COLLABORATORS

In all the present rash of international projects looking for members and finance, from Cern and its ambitions to build a 300 GeV proton accelerator to the several offshoots of the international unions, it is important that EMBO should not be forgotten. (Given the name, indifference is a more real danger than forgetfulness.) Formally, the organization is now nearly four years old, and for much of that time it has leaned on the Volkswagen Foundation for support. Constitutionally it is a private company registered in Switzerland, and its aims are to foster research in molecular biology in whatever ways seem appropriate and potentially rewarding. There has been a small but imaginative programme of exchange visits between laboratories, and EMBO (which stands for European Molecular Biology Organization) reckons to have been able to act more quickly and informally in assisting research people to spend short periods in other laboratories than their own. But this is only a beginning. The organization is anxious quickly to increase its activities and to enlarge their scope. It would like to be able to finance—or at least to catalyse—long-term appointments; it wants to provide advanced courses, to be able to make research grants and finally to establish a laboratory of its own, with an independent source of funds. But ambitious plans like these are not easily accommodated within the framework of a private organization. Everybody seems to agree that funds would have to come from governments, and that governments would often be unable to hand over money unconditionally. Yet, as a meeting in Geneva some months ago (see *Nature*, **214**, 445; 1967) seems to have determined, this is not a serious stumbling block. Some kind of agreement between European governments and EMBO seems fortunately to be inevitable. The question remaining to be determined is what the agreement shall consist of.

The first thing to be said is that there was no accident in the choice of Geneva as a site for the first confrontation between the organizers and the governments which may eventually support them. (The Government of Israel has been helping for some time.) Obviously the example of Cern is intended as a model and, if it comes to that, Geneva would make a splendid site for the laboratory which EMBO would like to build. It is right to add, however, that EMBO's plans are comparatively modest. Not so long ago, the organizers had calculated that the cost of their ideal programme would come to hardly more than £250,000 a year—roughly three times its rate of spending now.

The laboratory is a bigger undertaking, costing perhaps £2·5 million to build and to equip, and something in excess of £1 million a year to operate. It is no surprising that governments have been more syms pathetic towards the kind of work which EMBO hat been doing already, and sceptical about the laboratory and the delegation to EMBO of the duty to make grants for scientific research. The cost is not entirely negligible even when shared out among a dozen governments or more. But there are also fears, mostly unreasonable, that the creation of a centre of excellence on a European scale would simply serve to drain away from existing laboratories people who are scarce to begin with. The fallacy in this is that the laboratories like that which EMBO has in mind quite quickly increase the stock of people working in the field concerned. A more serious problem is that a central laboratory might take too many people away from teaching; some attention should be paid to this problem in the few months which remain before the next confrontation with the governments. On balance, it would make sense if the European governments—those which adhere to Cern and possibly some others as well—could agree to build the laboratory as well as to finance on a continuing basis the kind of work which EMBO has been doing so far.

Providing money for the financing of research projects on a European basis is a more tricky proposition, cheaper though it might well turn out to be. The trouble here, of course, is that a private organization must necessarily be less able than a government to make compromises between such conflicting pressures as the need to finance excellence and the need to help backwardness. In the long run, there would be great benefits in research councils operating on a continental scale, but nobody should be surprised if, for the time being, this particular dream is unfulfilled.