

narrow preoccupation with such matters as old age pensions, promotion and the like, and ritualistic denunciations of American imperialism or of the docility of the Government in the face of capitalist enterprise. Limiting himself to one particular and important point, M. Pierre Aigrain, general delegate for technical and scientific research, who was attending as an observer, announced that a working party was to be appointed to study the alarming problem of the mobility—or rather, immobility—of research workers. The Government, which has made some fairly ill-considered decisions in this field (see *Nature*, 217, 796; 1968), is now anxious to rationalize its strategy and see how a more fluid transition from research to teaching or to the industrial sector could be encouraged.

Two speeches created a special interest. M. Pierre Juquin, the Communist deputy, who announced that his party would soon be laying before Parliament a bill on the organization of research, outlined its main aspects. A representative of the SNIRS (the Independent National Union for Scientific Research) also introduced a plan for reorganization. They both offered, therefore, a valid response to what seems to be a great preoccupation among French research workers—that of assuring democratization of the decision-making procedure. To judge from opinions culled recently from politicians of all persuasions, the ranks of the opposition, both right wing and left wing, seem to be agreed on the necessity for creating a widely representative council whose job it is to guide the Government and provide Parliament with information on matters of scientific policy and which would replace the authoritarian machinery at present operative, or would at least contain it.

The scientists engaged on basic research have the feeling that they are the mere tools of a few big power-hungry “bosses”, working hand in glove with a few technocrats. But are the scientists fully aware of the responsibilities which they wish to acquire? One has frequently had the impression that they lack knowledge of the economic facts of life, among other things. Industrial problems, in particular, were frequently mentioned, but the speakers and their audience—consisting mainly of people from the universities—seemed to be paying lip service to a noble if somewhat vague cause. It is curious, for example, that no special attention has been given to the mysterious ANVAR (National Bureau for Research Evaluation), the setting up of which was decided 18 months ago and is still no more than a plan. This organization, whose job it would be to ensure the vigorous utilization of inventions made at the National Scientific Research Centre or in the universities, has not yet found a director, apparently for financial reasons. The French Government, after much hesitation, is preparing, it seems, to appoint M. Maurice Ponte, a member of the institute and former president of the Compagnie Générale de Télégraphie sans Fil. This appointment will probably arouse only mild enthusiasm, because of the age of M. Ponte and his lack of success at the head of the CSF which he left in a critical financial position. French scientists should at least be concerned about ANVAR, and try to do something about its future activity. There is still time.

This first session was an interesting if somewhat confused attempt which smacked as much of a huge psychological drama as of a working meeting. It ought to help in organizing seriously in 1969 a more

constructive meeting. For the time being, research workers in France, as elsewhere, are aware of the necessity for a more active participation in the running of society but are still anxious to retain the academic purity of their work. They are torn between a nostalgia for the priestly pursuit of science and the intoxicating thought of a boundless civil service. Neither mystics nor commission members, they are trying first of all to discover themselves.

Parliament in Britain

from our Parliamentary Correspondent

Renal Transplants

ON April 5 Sir Gerald Nabarro moved the Second Reading of the Renal Transplantation Bill permitting “removal from the body of a human person, duly certified as dead, of any kidney or kidneys required for medical purposes, unless there is reason to believe that the deceased during his lifetime had instructed otherwise”. He pointed out that the need for this Bill—which is really an amendment of the Human Tissue Act, 1961—has arisen as a result of the near-perfection of the technique of transplanting kidneys. He referred to the 1961 Act, according to which kidneys cannot be removed without the permission of the next of kin. Because kidneys are valueless for transplants unless chilled or refrigerated one hour after removal from a dead body, Sir Gerald maintained that at present it is impossible to obtain permission in time. But the Bill would permit kidney banks. Sir Gerald Nabarro also drew attention to the provision that, before kidneys can be removed, a death certificate must be signed by two doctors other than the surgeon performing the operation.

Mr Laurence Pavit supported the Bill, saying that Britain has more kidney machines per head of population than any other country. He suggested that the Bill was necessary for dialysis work, because successful dialysis on renal failure must be complemented by a transplant programme.

Mr Kenneth Robinson, the Minister of Health, applauded Sir Gerald's motives, but stressed the importance of safeguards to prevent unnecessary affront. The Bill was read a second time. (Debate, April 5.)

Orfordness

MR J. E. B. HILL asked the Secretary of State for Defence what the radius will be from the radio station at Orfordness within which there could be a hazard from radiation, and what steps he intends to take to safeguard fishermen and yachtsmen from this danger. Mr Rees replied that the zone in which radiation could create a hazard does not reach the sea, that the site is a prohibited area and that warning notices will be erected. In reply to a question from Mr Goodhew, Mr Rees said that discussions between the Governments of the United States and Britain about the Anglo-American radar station to be built began in October 1966, and agreement was reached in June 1967. Mr Goodhew wanted to know to what extent the radio station would result in Great Britain having greater warning of attack by missiles. Hedging a little, Mr Rees replied that the station would carry out radio research, some of which would have a bearing on methods of early warning of missile attacks. (Written answers, April 1.)