

enterprises, the study group nevertheless says that "if serious deficiencies persist, it is of the utmost importance that they be corrected in order not to degrade the scientific value of the samples. This matter requires immediate attention in order to avoid the possible necessity of delaying the examination of samples returned by future missions". This raises, in short, the horrific prospect of the Houston Laboratory as a kind of museum from the start.

NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS

No Panic on Amchitka

THE United States Atomic Energy Commission has issued a factual but reassuring report of the consequences of the megaton explosion of a nuclear weapon 4,000 ft beneath the surface of Amchitka Island in Alaska on October 2. By now, of course, it is widely known that on this occasion, the explosion did not trigger off an earthquake of any size. The AEC says that the explosion itself registered 6.5 on the Richter scale, which is what had been predicted in advance. It does, however, seem that there were "a few rock slides and earth slumps" along the sea coast, together with some cracking of roadways and movement of road embankments saturated with water. In some places, temporary buildings were moved by the explosion but there was no damage to the airfield or to the utilities on the island.

The most serious damage seems to have been immediately above the point of the explosion, where some side panels in a workshop were shaken loose. The explosion was recognized easily by people even as far away as twenty-eight miles, in the north-west of the island, although "the ground motion was barely perceptible" on the mainland 200 miles away. It has already been reported that shock waves were felt strongly, about 11 seconds after the explosion, on the warship Princeton, about eight miles north-west of the island. The AEC says that such water waves as there may have been could not have exceeded two inches, and that the only earth movements consisted of a great many small tremors immediately around the cavity that came to an end after broken rock above the cavity collapsed into it a day and a half after the explosion. The surface of the island is however permanently scarred by a saucer shaped depression twenty feet deep and some hundreds of feet across. By all accounts, there has been no damage to the biological environment. Birds are said to have continued in occupation and trout and salmon have survived the over-pressure produced in lakes and streams although some sticklebacks were killed by concussion in nearby ponds. A variety of animals, including crabs and sea otters, are said to have been unaffected by the explosion although the AEC promises to keep the ecological effects under continuing review.

DEFENCE RESEARCH

Half Settlement at MIT

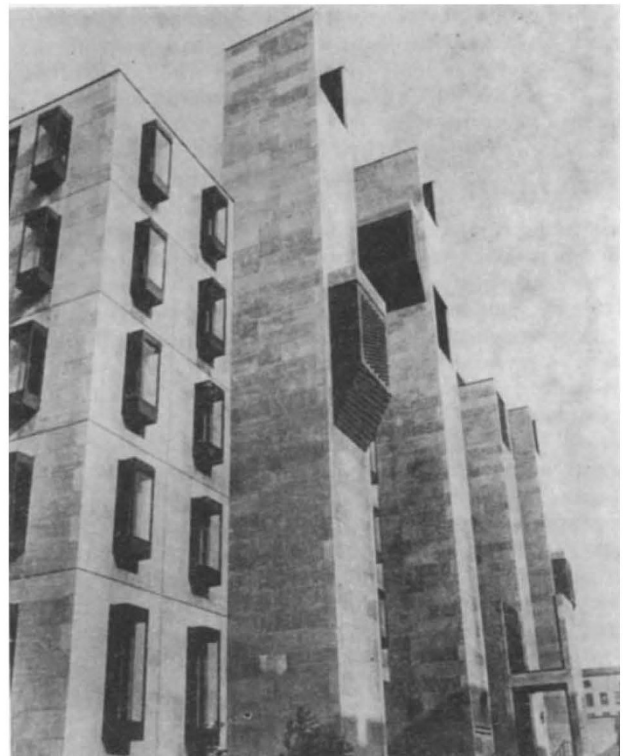
THE disturbances at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology earlier this week are a surprising sequel to what seems to have been a friendly encounter between the president, Dr Howard W. Johnson,

and the faculty at the institute on October 22, when the report of the review panel on special laboratories was discussed. By all accounts, only 15 out of 450 members of the faculty opposed the recommendation that the two principal laboratories, the Lincoln Laboratory and the Instrumentation Laboratory, which have been largely concerned with defence research, should gradually shift their emphasis towards the solution of "domestic and social problems". The position of the two laboratories was first given prominence by student protest in 1968.

In his statement at the faculty meeting, Dr Johnson said that the future of the two laboratories was critical for the institute. It has been accepted that there should be a change in the direction of the laboratories—the question was how best to satisfy the legitimate interests of MIT and not the government. He said that it was also necessary to protect the interests and integrity of those working at the laboratories. The final report of the review panel, from which four of the twenty-two members dissented, recommends that the shift in direction should be accompanied by the declassification of a large part of the workers in the laboratories, the development of better relationships between the faculty and the students at the laboratories, and the creation of a standing committee to review the programme of the laboratories.

GEOPHYSICS

New Laboratory



The Henry Hinds Laboratory for the Geophysical Sciences at the University of Chicago was officially opened on October 14. The building, which is dominated by ten tower appendages, has been designed by I. W. Colburn & Associates Inc. of Chicago and is said to be in the "contemporary gothic" style. It cost \$5 million, partly supplied by the late Mr Henry Hinds, an oil geologist.