

## Parliament in Britain

### Gas Centrifuge Agreement

THE agreement to develop the gas centrifuge process for enriching uranium, signed last week by Great Britain, Holland and West Germany, may later be extended to include Italy and Belgium. Mr David Luard, Joint Under Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said that discussions are taking place with these countries, and both have formally expressed interest in joining the agreement. Mr Luard also gave an assurance that stringent safeguards and security arrangements have been written into the agreement. (Written answers, March 2.)

### Polytechnics

EIGHTEEN major building projects for polytechnics, at a total cost of £6.2 million, have been given the go-ahead for 1970-71. Between 1967 and 1970, further education building programmes have included projects worth £17.7 million at colleges now forming part of designated or proposed polytechnics. These figures were given by Mr Gerald Fowler, Minister of State for Education and Science, and later the Secretary of State, Mr Edward Short, said that the proposed polytechnic at Huddersfield will probably be designated on September 1, 1970. Fourteen polytechnics have so far been designated. (Written answers, March 5.)

### Fluoridation

THE government may be forced to bring in legislation to compel local authorities to introduce fluoride into water supplies. This warning was given by Mr Richard Crossman, Secretary of State for the Social Services, after he had said that however much time, money and trouble are taken, eyes that are determinedly closed cannot be opened. His department, he said, has spent £300 this year to promote the case for fluoride in water supplies, but Mr Frank Judd asked for higher priority to be given to supplying authentic and appropriate information to local authorities on fluoridation. Mr Judd said that a number of authorities are taking half baked decisions on the basis of totally inadequate information. (Oral answers, March 9.)

### Pneumoconiosis

THE greater weight of respirable dust particles in South Wales coalmines may be the reason why the incidence of pneumoconiosis in the South Wales coalfield is almost twice as high as in other British coalmines. Accordingly, from the end of this month, new dust standards, based on the weight of dust in the atmosphere, will be introduced in all mines operated by the National Coal Board. This announcement was made by Lord Delacourt-Smith. (Oral answers, Lords, March 5.)

### Strategic Nuclear Deterrent

MR DENIS HEALEY, Secretary of State for Defence, said that the government has no plans for modernizing Great Britain's nuclear deterrent, although the effectiveness of the Polaris system is kept constantly under review. Sir Ian Orr-Ewing asked whether reports that the government has refused to modernize Polaris missiles are true, but Mr Healey replied that steps had already been taken to improve the penetration capability of Polaris following the news of a Soviet ABM system. (Oral answers, March 4.)

## Miscellaneous Intelligence

"THE real purpose of the book I am writing is to say the human race is not so bad, after all. It can produce cancer workers. I have tremendous admiration for them; I think they are doing absolutely marvellous work; and I am proud to be a member of the same race"—Bernard Glemser in *Man Against Cancer* (Bodley Head, London, 1970). "Were it not for the tremendous amounts of money available, wrung from a susceptible public by an obviously emotional appeal, I suspect that very few scientists would be working directly on cancer. It seems to me that the mechanism of cancer is most unlikely to be discovered until pure biologists have unravelled a great deal more about the fundamental processes which go on inside a normal living cell. Most competent biologists probably realize this and avoid working directly on the problem of cancer. As a result, many research workers in the cancer field, I fear, are equipped with more dedication and money than scientific ability"—David Horrobin in *Science Is God* (Medical and Technical Publishing, Aylesbury, 1970).

ACCORDING to a list prepared by Professor A. M. Liquori, head of the Laboratory of Physical Chemistry and Electrochemistry at Rome University, his department published no less than 63 papers during 1967-69. Professor Liquori is author or co-author of 42 of the 63 papers.

THE view that the Irish are unduly partial to alcohol has been irrefragably refuted. Figures compiled by the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin and reported in the *Journal of the Irish Medical Association* (63, 39; 1970) reveal the sober truth that Ireland is among the least bibulous of nations, consuming each year only 102 pints of beer a head compared with the Englishman's 164 pints and the German's 224. This being the case, how can the myth of Irish drunkenness have arisen? Possibly from the untypical propensities of the Irish immigrants to the United States, the Dublin Institute cannily suggests. Perhaps—but under what kind of influence could James Joyce have been when he wrote "Ireland sober is Ireland stiff".

Is the civilized world really awake to the true perils of cannabis? In South Africa they are not deceived. According to Mr Richard Neville, the editor of OZ (in *Play Power*, Cape, London, 1970), a South African textbook of criminology warns that "in extreme cases marijuana can so destroy a man's character that he mixes freely with persons of another race".

THE following genealogical conundrum is posed in a current issue of *Zootecnica e Veterinaria* (11-12, 281; 1969): "Chauries have originated from Yaks (female is known as Nak) and Khirkoo and Jolung bulls on lower hill Zebu cattle. The female of Yak which is commonly known as Nak produces chauries when crossed with a bull locally known as Khirkoo and Jolung. Chauries are further subdivided into two types depending on different combinations of parents. Chauries obtained by crossing Nak (mother) with Jolung or Khirkoo bulls (father) is called as DIMJU and is supposed to be of a better quality than the one called URUNG which is obtained by crossing lower hill cows (Zebu cattle) with Yaks." Dimju jolung a chaury urung't you the nak?