quake, were declared high risk areas and ineligible for government reconstruction aid. But relocation of the business area was said to be too expensive by the businessmen and little by little concessions were made. Now, six years after the earthquake, new buildings have been constructed on top of the very area that suffered sliding, and an apartment house and a luxury hotel have been built in a designated high risk area next to the slide.

## Changes at MIT

THE presidency of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology will fall vacant in June next year when Mr Howard W. Johnson steps down to become chairman of MIT's Board of Trustees, known as the corporation. Mr Johnson will take the place of Mr James R. Killian, former science adviser to President Eisenhower, who has announced he will retire then.

Mr Johnson has been president of MIT since July 1966 and will have served a full five years in office which, he says, "have been the best five years of my life". But he has made no secret of the arduous nature of the job and has recommended that the Board of Trustees should reassess the presidency to see how some of the responsibilities might be shared among colleagues.

Another change at MIT is the appointment of Dr Eugene B. Skolnikoff as head of the Department of Political Science. Dr Skolnikoff served as assistant to Dr Killian, Dr George B. Kistiakowsky and Dr Jerome B. Wiesner during their terms as science adviser to the president.

METEOROLOGY

## Microscope on St Louis

from a Correspondent

A LARGE-SCALE cooperative study of the impact of a large city on the atmospheric environment is to be launched in 1971. A planning meeting bringing together the various scientists concerned recently took place at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), Boulder, Colorado. The object is to study the sources and effect of urban pollution and the physical and chemical reactions produced by pollutants in the atmosphere. St Louis has been chosen as the target city because it is neither a grossly polluted area nor an exceptionally clean one, so that conclusions would apply widely elsewhere. This will be a multiple research project with six groups taking part, though not necessarily at the same time, and will take several years to complete.

The first part of the programme will test the theory that urban air pollution affects rainfall patterns downwind from a large city. This is to be handled by a team drawn from the Illinois State Water Survey, the University of Chicago, the University of Wyoming and the Argonne National Laboratory. It will take five years, and will employ 200 rain gauges, three radar systems, several standard weather stations and specially instrumented aircraft. The Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) has proposed work on mesoscale weather prediction involving computerized numerical forecasting of medium-scale features such as thunderstorms using a dense, three-dimensional network of weather stations.

NCAR itself plans the systematic monitoring of persistent pollutants well downwind of the city using ground stations and aircraft. It is hoped that this will be a first step in predicting which pollutants (if any) have lifetimes long enough to threaten contamination of the atmosphere on a continental or even global scale. There has been much alarm but little evidence of this possibility in the United States; there has been less of both elsewhere—indeed, the latest report of Britain's alkali inspectorate publicly pooh-poohs the idea (*Nature*, **227**, 875; 1970) as speculative. It will be useful to have some facts on the matter at last. Previous American observations (quoted in the recent Presidential report on environmental quality) have shown that large American cities have more rain, more cloud and more fog than the surrounding countryside, and that there is a "thermal mountain" in the atmosphere above them.

CANADA

## Doing More with Less

Two chief themes run through the report of the National Research Council of Canada for the financial year 1969–70. The year was dominated by financial stringency which seems to have caused much soul-searching and reassessment of priorities—especially in the NRC university support programme—and the council was clearly concerned to improve its sponsorship of applied research. The National Research Council, a federal government agency charged with the task of supporting both university and industrial research, last year spent $132·7 million; $65 million went on university research grants and scholarships, while $6·3 million found its way to research in industry.

One of the NRC's responsibilities is to look after the external relations of Canadian science, and it must therefore have been a painful decision to abolish travel grants for Canadian university scientists when the council was forced to take in its belt. But the council is clearly looking towards greater rationalization and concentration of its resources—in much the same way as the British Science Research Council has done—to gain the maximum benefit from its limited funds. Unfortunately, however, the machinery for making choices between various projects is only now evolving in the NRC, and it is looking towards the Science Council of Canada—the chief policy making and advisory body—to give some lead.

Stung, perhaps, by the remarks of the OECD enquiry into Canadian science policy earlier this year (see *Nature*, **224**, 1054; 1969), the NRC has been taking a good look at its activities in the industrial research field. A small group of scientists, engineers and economists has been assembled to draw up long range plans and to review existing policies, and its chief tasks will be to improve the relationships between the universities and industry, while at the same time keeping a wary eye on the likely demand for scientific manpower.