

## NEW WORLD

## Geared for Action

by our Washington Correspondent

NEXT week, between five and ten thousand scientists will converge on Philadelphia for the annual post-Christmas extravaganza organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Part scientific meeting and part public relations exercise for the wonders of science, the annual meeting of the AAAS has for most of the past 138 years served to convey to an admiring public the fruits of scientific research and the flavour of the scientific enterprise. But, like the annual meeting of the British Association, that established order is slowly changing.

For one thing, scientists no longer save up their cherished results to reveal to the world at the annual meeting of the AAAS—that is now the province of scientific journals, or to a lesser extent of more prestigious meetings such as the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society. And, for another, the whole concept of scientists condescendingly handing out fruit from the tree of scientific knowledge to a grateful public (which is in any case indirectly paying for the research and is profoundly affected by it) is anathema to many scientists, and not just those on the far left. Consequently, the AAAS meeting is attempting more and more to look at the complex interrelationships between science and society, and the meetings are increasingly becoming the target of radical scientists who, campaigning under the slogan "science for the people", flamboyantly attack members of the scientific establishment for their elitism and "crimes against the people".

The past two meetings of the AAAS have caught headlines across the United States largely because of the tactics of the radical dissenters, and this year's meeting promises to be no exception. According to one member of SESPA (Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, the organization chiefly responsible for coordinating the dissenters at the past meetings), for example, "the turnout (of radicals) will exceed any one in the past", and according to another, radical scientists will be more in evidence in Philadelphia than they were in Chicago last year.

By their tactics at previous meetings, and widely publicized incidents such as an attack on one radical dissenter by the enraged wife of a biology professor armed with a knitting needle, the objectives of the radical scientists have been obscured and their antics have served chiefly to alienate even many of those scientists who sympathize with some of their objectives. Will this year's meeting see a change in tactics? Herb Fox, a

Boston scientist who was active in Chicago last year, and who has been heavily involved in planning SESPA tactics for this year's meeting, said tactics will be chosen to suit the occasion. "We plan to participate in the discussions in a helpful way," he said, but warned "if the AAAS chooses to stop meetings, we shall kick up a stink about it".

For their part, those involved in planning the AAAS meeting point out that they want to encourage participation, and that the menu for the meeting consists of a range of topics from hard science to those where the social content is high. A particular feature of the meeting will be a series of discussions of the role of science in meeting urban problems, particularly in Philadelphia, and there will also be sessions on conflict in Northern Ireland and on "the new radicalism in science". The AAAS even offered SESPA members a hand in planning part of the programme, a move which was rejected by the organization because it might be interpreted as a sign of support for the AAAS, and because it would compromise SESPA tactics at the meeting. Nevertheless, some members of SESPA, Fox included, will take part officially in the meetings, as individuals.

Has the AAAS decided to adopt its own tactics to forestall the protests of the radicals? According to William Bevan, executive officer of the AAAS, the society always prepares a set of operating rules for the chairmen: "We don't play things by ear". But he pointed out that everybody will be free at the meetings to put his own point of view. S. Fred Singer, chairman of the AAAS meetings committee, said that chairmen have been told not to allow bull horns, megaphones and so on into the lecture halls. They have also been given explicit instructions not to close meetings until people have had their say, but that if the meeting becomes unmanageable, they have the power to adjourn—such a decision could be put to a vote, he said.

Singer said that he expects less disruption of the meetings this year, because there will not be so much television coverage—"it is my feeling that many of these people were grandstanding for the television cameras", he said. Fox, however, says "we have done something for the AAAS which they have always wanted to do for themselves, get their name widely known". At least the 1973 meeting of the AAAS will be more removed from the attacks of radical American scientists—the annual meeting is to be held in Mexico City that year.

## ARTERIOSCLEROSIS

## Another Crusade

by our Washington Correspondent

A MUCH larger national programme aimed at improving prevention and treatment of arteriosclerosis and at stimulating research into its causes has been recommended by a task force set up under the auspices of the National Heart and Lung Institute. Although officials of the institute flatly deny that the report is "a counter-balance or a gimmick to compete with the cancer attack program", the report is aimed at launching a crusade against cardiovascular disease in much the same way as the report of the panel of consultants a year ago launched a crusade against cancer. Moreover, the forthcoming debate about the merits of instituting the report's recommendations will be an interesting lesson in the way Congress and the Administration will set about dealing with large but scientifically and emotionally strong claims from different sectors of biomedical research.

Prepared by a fifteen member task force under the chairmanship of Dr Elliot Newman of Vanderbilt University, and later of Dr Oglesby Paul of Northwestern University, the report calls for a programme which would cost \$120 million in the first year and \$175 million in the second year above the present funding of \$104 million for research and treatment of arteriosclerosis. The basis for this request is that arteriosclerosis is the number one killer in the United States, and that there already exists a strong base of knowledge which would allow programmes aimed at preventing the onset of the disease to have a significant effect on mortality in the United States.

Throughout the Congressional debate on cancer, it was repeatedly emphasized that the disease afflicts about one person in four, but that argument is considerably strengthened when applied to arteriosclerosis, for the task force points out that arteriosclerosis is directly or indirectly responsible for nearly half the deaths in the United States each year. The disease, which is essentially hardening of the arteries caused by fatty deposits on their inner walls, is most prevalent among individuals having one or more of three specific factors—high levels of blood lipids, high blood pressure and cigarette smoking. The task force therefore sees the chief aim of any Federal programme as an intensive effort aimed at public education linked with an expanded research effort aimed at discovering more precisely the links between various factors and onset of the disease.

That arteriosclerosis is caused in large measure by extraneous factors such as