

OLD WORLD

Too Much Freeze

MORALE among scientists working in government laboratories is lower than it has ever been, according to the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. Scientists are disenchanted according to Mr William McCall, general secretary of the IPCS, because of the government's constant refusal to set up an independent committee to determine the criteria by which pay for scientists within the civil service should be determined.

The government claims that pay research, by which pay of scientists within the government is compared with the pay of scientists working in industry and non-government establishments, is the most appropriate way of determining pay scales for its scientists. The IPCS, on the other hand, following many years of disagreement with the principle of pay research for scientists which culminated in the summer of 1971 with mass meetings and an independent tribunal, has vowed that there will never be another pay research exercise for government scientists.

A way out of this impasse was first put forward by the IPCS in August 1972, when it suggested the setting up of an independent committee. As yet, the government has not acceded to the request, with the result that both the IPCS and its members are becoming impatient. The IPCS has said that it will abide by the decisions of the independent committee even though it may recommend that pay research is indeed the best way.

At present, the science category is bottom of the pay league within the civil service. In 1969 the Administration, Science and what is now known as the Professional and Technology categories, had comparable maximum salaries for the Administrative Principal, Principal Scientific Officer and Principal Professional and Technology Officer grades, but since then the PSO has been left sadly behind. The Administrative Principal now commands a salary of £4,708 at the top of the scale, the Principal PTO £4,760, while the PSO has a maximum of £4,387.

The decision on whether or not to set up the committee has been affected by the government's pay freeze, and it is understood that the extended delay in making a decision is due to differences in opinion between government departments. The IPCS maintains that there is no conflict between the proposal to set up the committee and the government's

pay freeze, for the committee is to be concerned with criteria for determining pay, not with awarding increases.

The Civil Service Department said this week that it was "actively considering" the IPCS's request. Mr William McCall also said this week that the institution would have to consider the possibility of action—even stronger than that taken in 1971—if the government did not respond satisfactorily.

ROYAL SOCIETY

Research in Schools

THE Royal Society supported a hundred research projects in schools last year through its Scientific Research in Schools Committee. The scheme—which has been running since 1957—exists to enable school science teachers to undertake original research; it is financed by the Atomic Energy Authority and six companies who provide about £3,000 a year.

The committee receives about thirty applications a year from teachers and approves about twenty-five of them, providing applicants with items of equipment that their schools cannot supply. Although the grants are usually small—normally less than £100—the committee has been known to give grants of up to £600 to buy items such as a spectrophotometer. The object of the scheme is to encourage bright science graduates to enter teaching by providing them with the facilities for research if they have the time and the necessary skills. When a teacher applies for a grant he is sounded out by an adviser from his local university, who is on hand to help throughout the project.

Mr N. A. W. Le Grand, the secretary of the committee, points out that the Royal Society is anxious to support as wide a spectrum of projects as possible; current projects range from studies of pollution in the Tees Bay area to the measurement of the stability of metalamine complexes to work on radio astronomy and colour blindness. The Royal Society encourages the recipients to publish their results, and last year thirteen papers appeared in the literature as projects were completed.

Each grant is made personally to the teacher and not to his school, but the Royal Society examines the facilities of the school and the support it is likely to give the teacher before it makes a grant. The society does not automatically turn down applications from teachers who cannot involve any of their

pupils in their work, but such involvement is encouraged and one effect of the scheme has been to interest pupils in research, leading them to read science at university.

The time scale of the projects varies enormously. One on corrosion has been running for ten years, some involve seasonal studies for a number of years but other are relatively short lived. Since publicizing the scheme more widely two years ago (thousands of leaflets were mailed to schools and colleges of education all over the country), the Royal Society has been particularly eager to support practical research projects rather than pure research, which it feels is usually the province of the universities. The results have included a redesign of the scrubbing brush, which has been taken up commercially, a receiving station to pick up pictures from weather satellites, and a pram alarm that could prevent baby snatching. But the society is also supporting many more basic projects.

METEOROLOGY

Watching the Sun

from our Soviet Correspondent

AN unofficial "weather prophet" from Gornaya Shoriya in the Soviet far east has won official recognition for his theories of long range forecasting—that solar activity influences weather not only through variations in heat flux but also through other forms of radiation and that sun spot activity and variations in the solar wind should also be taken into account in long range forecasting.

Anatolii V. D'yakov, who mans the tiny meteorological station of Gornaya Shoriya assisted only by his wife, has for several years been issuing unofficial forecasts, particularly to the agricultural planners of the Virgin Lands. Although the recipients of these forecasts found them more than satisfactory ("Do we use them? We are guided by them!"; commented Academician A. I. Baraev of the All-Union Institute of Agricultural Sciences), the director of the Hydrometeorological Centre, Professor B. A. Bugaev, considered them little more than "charlatanism".

The success of D'yakov's three month forecasts, however, attracted considerable press coverage, first in local Siberian journals and finally (September 27, 1972) in *Pravda*. At the end of October D'yakov was invited to address an All-Union conference on the problem of the interaction of the Sun and the lower atmosphere. This conference resolved *inter alia* to implement a research programme on the effect of