IN BRIEF

SA nuclear alarm

The question mark surrounding the development of South Africa's capacity to produce nuclear weapons was brought more fully into relief last week following allegations made by the Soviet news agency Tass that South Africa was preparing to carry out weapons tests. The allegations anticipated the rush of diplomatic moves over Southern Africa late last week, and Dr Owen, the UK Foreign Secretary, and Herr Genscher, West Germany's Foreign Minister, each brought the subject up with their South African counterpart, Mr Pik Botha.

Bonn this week denied more reports of collaboration with South Africa on nuclear development. Like allegations earlier this year relating to contacts on nuclear matters between the two countries, these were based on docu-

ments reportedly in the possession of the African National Congress, the exiled black nationalist organisation based in Lusaka. According to the *Observer*, the ANC says that many military visits to Germany have been made under the cover of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and are arranged through the scientific counsellor at the Bonn Embassy. ANC officials are also reported as saying that 15 German research institutions, including the Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics at Heidelberg, have contributed to South Africa's arms programme.

Committee's report

In its latest report, the UK Select Committee on Science and Technology has examined a particular instance in which British industry did not exploit a

potentially useful innovation. Called 'A case study of machine tool development at the Cranfield Institute of Technology', the report outlines how a high-precision electronic formed-wheel gear-grinding machine, developed at Cranfield Unit for Precision Engineering and Matrix Machine Tools Ltd, failed to gain the financial support needed to develop it commercially.

Blame for this failure is distributed among most of those concerned with the project, though the committee admits that no one acted totally unreasonably. It criticises the Department of Industry's Mechanical Engineering and Machine Tools Requirements Board for not seeking more evidence on the machine's potential market; and the industries involved are criticised for not considering developing the machine as a joint venture.

THE University of California at Berkeley has long prided itself as being a citadel where liberal causes and freedom of thought, action and expression were fostered. Fostered, that is, by a predominantly male faculty. Women did the typing. A less-publicised aspect of campus life at Berkeley is that many women students feel personally insecure. These circumstances lend unusual interest to the appearance of a report, *Women Students at Berkeley: Views and Data on Possible Sex Discrimination in Academic Programs*, that has just been issued by the Office of the Chancellor; 140 pages long, it contains excerpts from academic units' self-evaluation reports and from students' responses to questionnaires.

Chairmen of departments, and other male administrators, made responses that were in many cases masterpieces of low-key diplomacy. The devotion of some respondents to women's liberation was exceeded only by the complete, or nearly complete, absence of women from regular faculty appointments in their departments. Most of us are familiar with the pre-emption of certain scientific fields, such as engineering, by males. It is also evident that physics, chemistry, astronomy and mathematics are predominantly male worlds, in which barriers against women are apparently raised long before college age. However, it surprised me to learn that "Palaeontology is simply a field of endeavour that fewer women than men find attractive, and it is naive to believe that the current disparity in numbers of women to men in the field can be brought to

parity by governmental fiat".

Space permits only a few highlights. The Chairman of the Department of Dramatic Arts notes that "Drama, for 2,000 years, has been predominantly written and acted by

Berkeley women

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males . . . Hamlet is a better role than Gertrude, and there are over 30 men and two women in the cast". It might be retorted that Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*, was much better at making up her mind and getting results than was the moody and vacillating Dane. Also, transvestite males filled women's roles on the stage of Shakespeare's day. Why should not the reverse procedure be tried now?

A laboratory director says, "In all fairness, it must be pointed out that the natural environmental conditions

at the High Altitude Laboratories are physiologically stressful, and for whatever the underlying sociological reasons, the use of the facilities by men has been substantially greater than by women". We hope that his laboratory will provide experimental evidence for the interesting implication that females are more affected by anoxia than are males. I believe that experimental subjects could readily be obtained, for US Governmental Affirmative Action policies have brought many female rangers to the National Parks and Forest Service areas close to the High Altitude Research Laboratory. I have encountered these athletic young females striding along the trails at elevations above 11,000 feet, apparently without signs of stress. Also, women members of the American Alpine Club are more tolerant of high altitudes than they are of suggestions that they are less able than males to adapt to them.

Medicine is a famous battleground of the sexes, and the early women MDs are revered as much as freedom fighters as for their clinical prowess. As every medical student knows, many professors in the clinical sciences are masterful male chauvinists. The report contains several citations of this, and also the following gem: "A neurologist described the Argyll-Robertson pupil 'like a whore who accommodates but does not react'".

Forty-six of the fifty-six female students responding to the questionnaire expressed fear of being raped on the campus at night. Practically none of their professors even mentioned this problem.