

IN BRIEF

A voice for geologists

Geologists in Britain who have felt for some time that they should have a collective voice for the profession have just founded an Institution of Geologists. The institution will aim to advance the profession and practice of geology by 'shaping opinion' in various centres of power and taking an interest in matters of professional standards, education, remuneration and so on. There are about 4,000 geologists in Britain, and a quarter of them have taken an interest in the founding of the institution.

The Geological Society of London, which will provide premises for the institution, was unable to perform these functions itself by virtue of being a learned society with charitable status. But in the long run many hope that the two bodies will operate jointly.

New line of questioning

The case of the dissident Moscow mathematician, Anatolii Shcharanskii, who has been held incommunicado since his arrest last March has now taken an ominous turn; last week, his fellow refusenik Vladimir Lazaris was called to the Lefortovo prison to answer questions about Shcharanskii's mental stability. Although Moscow activists feel it is too early to assess the significance of this new line of questioning, they feel that its proximity to the International Psychiatric Congress in Honolulu, at which the Soviet Union was censured for its use of psychiatric means of political repression, should not be ignored.

CFC policy

The UK government's policy not to ban the use of chlorofluorocarbons

(CFCs) in aerosols until much more research has been undertaken, is supported in a statement issued last week by the Clean Air Council, a statutory body set up to advise the Secretary of State for the Environment on air pollution. The Clean Air Council regards as tenuous the argument that CFCs lead to depletion of the ozone layer in the atmosphere allowing increased ultraviolet radiation to reach earth and possibly cause damage to health (for example, skin cancer).

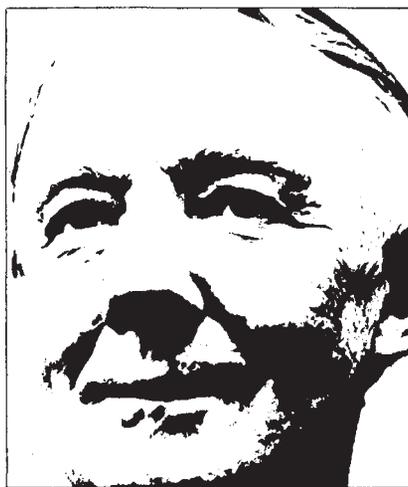
Since measurements began in the 1920s, the amount of ozone has in fact increased by 5-10%. The statement points out that 'natural' variations are enormously greater than those so far calculated to be a result of the use of CFCs. While supporting further research on CFCs, the Council regards the moves in the USA to ban their use as 'precipitate'.

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) is rightly concerned with nutrition, and with the more efficient production and distribution of the earth's resources. WHO has fortunately stopped putting forward absurd statements, such as the one that more than half the world's population is starving, which damaged its earlier reputation. The situation in many countries is serious enough without dramatic exaggerations. Some millions of people die annually of starvation, and several hundreds of millions are underfed for at least a part of the year.

Yet there is no need for this suffering. The world produces more than enough for every member of its population to receive an adequate and healthy diet. If waste and greed could be abolished, there would already be enough to feed the extra three or four thousand million mouths expected by the year 2,000. People starve, or are underfed, because they are poor, and cannot compete in the world market with the consumers in rich countries. The most voracious and wasteful of these consumers are livestock, the battery hens, pigs in sweat houses and barley beef, which waste both calories and protein to add to the pleasure of western palates.

The richer countries also have nutritional problems, but these arise from over and not under eating. When we hear that one of our friends is 'on a diet' we immediately understand that he is trying to lose weight gained by previous over-indulgence. Slimming is becoming big business. A substantial part of the food processing industry is making

allegedly non-fattening products. Newspapers fill their columns with bizarre diets which are often so revolting that their victims will lose weight. Health farms charge over-fed

Cuisine minceur**KENNETH MELLANBY**

pop stars more than five star hotels for organised starvation. Even reputable scientists explain how we may try to mislead our stomachs into believing that they have been generously indulged on a minimum number of calories.

A sophisticated attempt at making the best of both worlds—of gluttony and abstinence—is made by Michel Guérard in his new *Cuisine minceur* roughly translated as 'Slimming cookery'. The author runs one of the best, and most expensive, restaurants

in France. His book claims to be "an authoritative and authentic guide to a revolutionary new method which is sweeping the world of haute cuisine". It contains some good recipes; I was glad to learn how to produce a delicious *purée-mousse d'artichauts* and use up the glut of globe artichokes, one of the few vegetables spared by the plague of rabbits in my Huntingdonshire garden. But the new method seems mainly to eschew the more calorific dishes, and to use sugar substitute and *crème fraîche*, a tiresome preparation containing buttermilk. In fact in her introduction, Shirley Conran gives the game away, pointing out that M. Guérard's portions are small, for "if you eat large quantities of food, no matter what it is, you are not going to lose weight". Surely it would be sensible to avoid all this bother, and eat even smaller amounts of normal recipes. M. Guérard's dishes taste even better when made with real cream.

Clearly we should make the best of both worlds. If we in the West ate less we should be healthier, and there would be enough for the underfed nations; surely mankind is not too stupid to be unable to solve the economic difficulties. But we must learn that the only cure for over-eating is abstinence, not a fancy diet. Few are as naïve as the plump girl I heard lamenting her inability to eat enough starch-reduced bread, but the view that some foods encourage thinness is still widely held. High-protein diets are only slimming because they are so expensive. We should remember that the only sweetmeat with a truly non-fattening centre is the polo mint.