

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three Mile Island health effects

HEALTH officials in Pennsylvania have discounted recent claims that increased infant mortality in the area around the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant was due to the accident at the plant last March. They point out that the area also experienced an increase in total births, and that the mortality rate therefore remained constant.

However, they have also reported a "surprising" degree of anxiety among residents living near the reactor, with significant increases in the use of tranquillisers and sleeping pills. Nearly half of 1,000 people interviewed in January who live within 10 miles of the plant reported physical symptoms of stress, ranging from headaches and diarrhoea to a loss of appetite and the appearance of rashes.

The survey, conducted by behavioural scientists at the Hershey Medical Center of Pennsylvania State University, also found that nearly 13% of those living within five miles of the Three Mile Island plant had become anti-nuclear activists. Dr. H. Arnold Muller, the State Secretary of Health, called this figure "very significant."

Drilling Project faces big cut

THE US House of Representatives Science and Technology committee has proposed that federal support for the first year of a massive Ocean Margin Drilling Project, to be sponsored jointly by the National Science Foundation and private oil companies, be reduced from \$5 million to \$500,000.

The \$5 million recommended by the Carter Administration in its revised budget proposals last month had already been reduced from \$10 million included in the original NSF budget proposal in January. However, the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee, voting last week on the NSF appropriations request for the fiscal year 1981, is proposing restoring funding for the project to about \$9 million — which provides room for an appropriate compromise.

MIT raises \$250 million

THE Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced last week that it has successfully raised \$250.2 million — \$25 million above its target figure — in a five-year fund raising campaign.

About a quarter of the total will go to endowing new faculty positions, and an

equivalent amount to new teaching and research facilities, including the construction of the new Whittaker College of Health Sciences. The remaining funds will go to supporting new programmes and other uses.

MIT is also expected to announce this week a major agreement with the Exxon oil company to support basic combustion research at the institute.



Chojecki held

MIROSLAV Chojecki (above), a young Polish physicist and human rights activist, was recently arrested under a "procurator's sanction", which empowers the police to hold him up to 90 days without charge or trial.

Chojecki was formerly a research assistant working for his PhD at the Warsaw Nuclear Research Institute. During 1976, he was a frequent observer at the trials in Radom of workers who had taken part in the June demonstrations against food price rises. In October 1976 he was dismissed from his post and has not since been able to find professional employment. He has recently been active in "Nowa", the "independent" (i.e. underground) dissident publishing group.

In an "open letter" written shortly before his arrest, Chojecki stated that since his first arrest on 30 September 1976, he has spent about five months in detention (equivalent to one day a week). His flat has been searched 15 times ("once a quarter") and his person 80 times ("once a fortnight"). On only three occasions was a search warrant issued.

Items confiscated from him range from a text book of Fortran programming to a jar of curry powder (thought by the police to be radioactive isotopes), cuttings from the official Polish press, three tins of imported meat and the contents of his waste-paper basket. He has been fined on a number of occasions for petty offences a total of 19,000 zł. (£350).

It is understood that he is likely to be charged in the near future with being in unlawful possession of printing equipment.

Burbridge to head astrophysics unit

DR Margaret Brubridge has been appointed to direct the new Centre for Astrophysics and Space Sciences at the University of California in San Diego. The centre has been organised to coordinate the scientific activities of several groups which carry out research in astrophysics and space science in three university departments — physics, electrical engineering and computer science. Also included in the regrouping of space science disciplines is the cosmochemistry group in the chemistry department. The centre will house under one roof high energy astrophysics, solar physics, optical and infrared astronomy, the Faint Object Spectrograph (Space Telescope) team, magnetospheric physics and radio astronomy. Laurence E. Peterson and Elden C. Whipple will be associate directors of the centre.

CND marches again

THE UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) has organised a major demonstration to protest the installation of the Cruise missile on British soil. The demonstration will begin in Oxford and participants will march 18 miles to the US Air Force base in Upper Heyford, an expected site for the Cruise missile.

An internationally known organisation for the expression of grass roots opposition to nuclear war in the early 1960s, CND is undergoing a revival in the UK at the present time. "Judging from our mail and our discussions with the large number of volunteers that have come forward, people now are concerned about the international situation, particularly Carter's irresponsibility in Iran, the government's attempt to revive civil defence, and the increasing cost of the military budget at the expense of social services," says Caroline Coles of CND.

Monkey business

THE Indian Commerce Minister, Z. R. Ansari, recently told Parliament that there was no proposal to lift the export-ban on rhesus monkeys, though several representations had been received from importing countries. The ban was imposed two years ago by the Janta Government following revelations that rhesus were being used in neutron bomb testing. The US drug industry is trying to convince the Indian government that the ban has adversely affected the introduction of several new drugs and even caused shortage of polio vaccine, which is sold in large quantities in India.