

the extra support going mainly to research on biopolymers, nutrition and biotechnology. This new emphasis coincides with a reorganization of the Food Research Institute and the setting up of a joint ARC-Medical Research Council working party on food research policy.

Irrespective of MAFF, ARC has been increasing support for research in priority areas, in particular by introducing a new scheme for supporting work in universities outside the normal research grant system. ARC research groups in photosynthesis have been set up at the universities of Leeds and Sheffield and at Imperial College, London; and at the University of Bristol a group has been established in the neurobiology of animal behaviour and reproduction. The ARC's plans for the forthcoming year include the establishment with the Medical Research Council of a new unit at Edinburgh on neuropathogenesis.

Judy Redfearn

British dentists

Broader, better

The proposal that dentists newly qualified from British dental schools should not be allowed to practise without first spending a year in supervised practice is the chief recommendation of an inquiry into dental education, commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation and published earlier this week. The inquiry was directed by Sir Gordon Wolstenholme and supervised by a steering committee under Professor T. C. Thomas, previously vice-chancellor of the University of Liverpool.

British dentistry, long saddled with an international reputation not very different from that of the British motor car industry, is offered a cheerful future in the report (to be had from the Nuffield Foundation at £4.50). The incidence of caries among children is decreasing, dramatically so in cities such as Birmingham where there has been fluoridation of water supplies for some time. In the ten years from 1968, the proportion of the British population entirely without teeth (described in the report as "the edontulous state") decreased from 36 per cent to 29 per cent.

Part of the stimulus for the inquiry was the recognition that dentists now being trained would still be in practice when the state of British dental health has been further transformed, so that the pattern of practice will have changed, and when novel dental technology will be available.

The theme of the inquiry's report is that dentists should be trained for flexibility. The dental schools are told that their present output of professionals is likely to be sufficient for the future, but that British dentists should rely more than is their present habit on ancillaries, especially hygienists and therapists, all of whom are in need of more explicit training and career structures.

On the curriculum of the dental schools,

the report argues for greater attention to basic science and the early introduction of students to clinical work. Present dental courses are too narrowly vocational, and should be broadened but not lengthened (at present training lasts four or five years). Instead, the argument goes, there should be a pre-registration year.

But where? Newly qualified physicians spend their pre-registration years in hospitals, but dentists have no comparable places of supervised work. The committee suggests a system of supervision in practice organized by the dental schools and based on the Community Dental Service or on the dental services provided for the forces. It also wants to see a period of vocational training in the first two years of a dentist's regular practice and more opportunities for in-service training than there are at present.

The committee of inquiry also asks that steps should be taken to increase the present scale of dental research in Britain, including the setting up of a national research centre. One obvious present difficulty is that most dental research is at present undertaken on short-term research grants.

The committee neatly skirts around the most contentious problems in British dentistry — how should dentists be paid? It echoes the general discontent (shared by some dentists and most National Health Service patients) that the present system of piecework payments is unsatisfactory, but judiciously recommends that professional organizations "should seek a system of payment . . . other than that existing at present".

Israeli science

Crisis at Weizmann

Financial crisis threatens the "very existence" of the Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel's private and principal research institution — or at least that is what Weizmann president, Professor Michael Sela, told the governing body recently. But according to the Weizmann Institute Foundation in London, which helps to raise money in the United Kingdom for the institute in Israel, the Weizmann finances have never been better.

Somewhere between these two statements lies the true position — that the Israeli government, which provides 45 per cent of the institute's running costs, has announced government spending cuts which will reduce its contribution to the Weizmann Institute by 7½ per cent (in real terms) compared with last year; and that Professor Sela was painting a grim picture to drum up support from the Weizmann's foreign friends, who are strongly represented on the governing body.

Foreign endowments and bequests from Europe as well as the United States contribute around 20 per cent of the Weizmann's funds. While these contri-

butions have been increasing, they have not kept up with inflation outside Israel — except for the United Kingdom, whose donation has increased by two-thirds in the past two years. This is due to the encouragement of Lord Sieff, chairman of the major British chain store Marks and Spencer, and also chairman of the Weizmann Institute board of governors.

The net result is that the Weizmann budget will be static this year (October 1980 to September 1981) in dollar terms at about \$30 million, whereas institute officials would have liked to see a small growth to take into account inflation abroad (where scientific equipment, for example, must mostly be bought).

Nevertheless, in 1980 funds were sufficient to establish, on a scientific staff of 300, five new "career development



Sela, crying wolf!?

chairs", as an exercise to introduce new talent to the campus, and 10 professorial chairs. Money for these came mostly from the United States, but also from France and South Africa. Two new research centres were also established within the institute: the K. B. Weissman Institute of Physical Sciences and the Melvyn A. Dobrin Centre of Plant Research. Moreover, the Yeda Research and Development Company, which acts as a link between the institute and industry, increased its turnover to \$4.5 million in 1980, compared with \$1 million three years ago. (One recent venture, Inter-Yeda, manufactures human fibroblast interferon for use in clinical trials.) The government cuts must therefore be seen in the context of a recent very healthy spending pattern at the Weizmann.

Nevertheless, 70 per cent of the institute's budget is spent on salaries; so the effect of a cut in total budget is magnified when compared with the 30 per cent the institute has to spend on books, equipment and fuel. Bequests on the whole do not provide these items; so cuts are, in the end, having to be made in these financially marginal but scientifically significant areas. Because a potential donor is not likely to want his name on a batch of test tubes or even a spectrophotometer, the Weizmann may find it more difficult to raise this kind of small change abroad.

Robert Walgate