

Cutback on West German development

Money now in short supply in Bonn

The West German research ministry is being forced by economic problems to reassess priorities. Last week, the Bundestag began a discussion of the proposals put forward by the new science minister, Andreas von Bulow, whose plan for 1981 will increase the budget by only 5.2 per cent, now less than the rate of inflation. This new small increase has come as a shock to West German planners who are unused to having their budget cut.

The increase is less than had been forecast in the three-year forward plan published a year ago, which promised an increase of 10 per cent (in money terms) for 1981. The new research budget is not, however, out of line with revisions of other government expenditures, consequences of the worsening economy.

The research ministry, which controls the lion's share of funds for German research, is planning to save money by cancelling some new projects. Mr von Bulow says that he does not want to delay projects already under way. Expensive demonstration projects are likely to suffer most, but the government hopes that some of their cost can be taken over by the utilities (in nuclear power and coal), by industry, the Länder or local government. University research may do better because of the commitment to keeping university researchers in employment. The aim is to keep the proportion of the budget spent on basic research at just over 30 per cent.

Three particular projects are affected. A demonstration track for testing an advanced passenger train and a new tokamak device for fusion experiments at the Institute for Plasma Physics in Garching have already been abandoned. The cancellation of the demonstration track is expected to save DM30–40 million this year and DM 250 million by the end of 1983. The fusion device, known as Zephyr, would have cost an estimated DM500 million to build at 1980 prices. Its cancellation has removed a major project from the work of the plasma physics institute and has led the ministry to ask the institute to become more involved in the Joint European Torus (JET) under construction in Britain.

A decision has yet to be reached on the fate of the third project, a coal liquefaction plant being built in Virginia, United States. Germany and Japan are each expected to contribute 25 per cent of its cost and the Bundestag is having to assess the repercussions of cancellation.

Research fields likely to receive more than a 5.2 per cent increase include coal, radioactive waste disposal, micro-electronics, biotechnology and polar research. The likely losers include transport, building, space research and the large nuclear research centres. University building is also to be reduced and savings will be made at the Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron (DESY) by reducing the operating time of PETRA, the electron-positron machine. In all fields, the aim is to cut spending on development in favour of research.

The universities will nevertheless be affected to some extent. The ministry helps to support some specific university projects even though most of the money comes from Länder and from the Deutsches

Forschungsgemeinschaft, the chief source of funds for university research. The Länder, which support the basic infrastructure including staff salaries, are also cutting increases in their budgets, but they are limited by their commitment to keep tenured staff in employment. The Forschungsgemeinschaft's budget is intended to increase from DM780 million in 1980 to DM830 million in 1981, an increase of 6.4 per cent.

In a revision of the forward plan to 1983, savings of DM2,000 million on the entire federal government research budget are planned for the next three years. The Bundestag's deliberations on the research budget will last for another few months, but a radical departure from the proposals is unlikely.

Judy Redfern

Polish students sit in at universities

Poland now also has its student sit-ins. At the University of Lodz, 6,000 students drawn from the university, the technical university and the medical school have so far been involved in a sit-in which began in mid-January. The academic work of these establishments is virtually paralysed. The students' demand is for university autonomy and a less rigid curriculum.

Lodz is not unique. At the end of November, there was a sit-in lasting several days at the University of Warsaw, while in January some 200 final-year students of the Wroclaw agricultural academy held a sit-in over issues such as the system of examinations and credits. In particular, they demanded that the present system of rigid lectures and examinations in "socio-political sciences" should be replaced by informal seminars.

The issue of "socio-political" teaching is one of the fifty-odd grievances of the Lodz protesters. The range of their complaints is considerable and, as the Minister of Science, Higher Education and Technology, Janusz Gorski, said after talks with the university senate last week, many of them are impractical. A maximum of 3 months military service for students, for example, would be meaningless. The most striking feature of the Lodz protest, however, is not the range of demands but the range of participants; the action is backed not only by the new Independent Students' Association and the Solidarity chapters of the academic staff, but also by the university party committee and the "old" organizations — the Association of Polish Socialist Students and the Union of Polish Teachers.

The Lodz protest is a symptom of discontent that runs throughout all Polish academic life. Implementation of the Gdansk Accords, signed at the end of the summer, is slow, and delays in drafting new bills on academic autonomy and the reduction of censorship to the minimum

needs of national security have evoked much anxiety that the terms of the accords may remain paper pledges only.

Thus the censorship bill, promised for 30 November, which is to take academic publishing out of the censors' control, has not yet appeared, even though the extended deadline of 15 January has been passed. Two draft bills have in fact been produced — one by the Minister of Justice, Jerzy Bafia, and one by a "public drafting committee", headed by Warsaw philosopher Dr Klemens Szaniawski. The problem of reconciling the two has become bogged down in the question of accountability. Minister Bafia would like the Office of Press, Publications and Performances (the censorship) to remain, as now, accountable to the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet). Dr Szaniawski's committee, however, wants it to be answerable to the Sejm (Parliament). Many of the proposals for "social renewal" put forward in recent months have called for the Sejm to play a more active role in the political life of the country.

In the absence of legislation, some universities have been quietly making their own reforms. Some rectors have made available to their students the university holdings of "restricted" texts.

Anomalies inevitably abound. Thus last week the Procurator General's office warned that issuing uncensored publications still carries a potentially heavy gaol sentence. Yet a few days previously, the censors had passed an issue of the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* which described lectures given in Gdansk by the clandestine "Society for Academic Courses" (Flying University) — lectures which, in pamphlet form, are regularly published by the underground press.

Censorship is only one of the burning academic issues. Dr Aleksander Gieysztor, the newly elected president of the Polish Academy of Sciences, sees the

democratization of academic life as a two-stage process. The first, minor, stage, he observed recently, is "already under way" — the introduction of regulations leading to "autonomy, democratization and better information". The second, and more important stage, is to reform the "overdeveloped" administration, and to ensure that scientific committees truly represent the interests of their members.

Cutbacks in the scientific bureaucracy will be greatly welcomed in the natural and technical sciences where the hierarchical classification of research projects, introduced in the early 1970s, means not only that virtually all research has to be orientated to some need of the national economy but also that there should be a vast bureaucracy to deal with funds and administration.

Given less paper-shuffling and a certain latitude in undirected, research, few academics would overlook the needs of the economy. On the contrary, Solidarity has already set up its own "All-Poland Coordinating Committee for Science" and the Solidarity chapters in the various universities have put forward their own proposals for what should be done.

Some proposals are ambitious, such as that drawn up two weeks ago by the Jagellonian University of Krakow which calls for action on censorship, visas for academic travel, health service reform, pollution and the amelioration of the social conditions leading to alcoholism. Others are more specific, such as the defence issued by the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University of Lublin of the claim of Poland's 3.5 million peasant farmers to the right to form a trade union. **Vera Rich**

Telecommunications suit

Pact postponed

For lack of an assistant attorney-general, the Reagan Administration has had to postpone the settlement of its anti-trust suit against AT&T, the telephone company. Details of the settlement, which were to have been made public last Friday, will not now become known until 2 March, the date set by the trial judge, Howard H. Greene, for the submission of a settlement between the telephone company and the US Department of Justice.

The suit was begun in November 1974, and the trial opened on 16 January with formal statements by the two parties, followed by a recess. The further postponement is at the request of the Department of Justice, which explained in a letter to the court that it could not proceed until the Administration had appointed an assistant attorney-general with responsibility for anti-trust affairs.

The settlement, the essence of which has already been agreed, will have an important influence not merely on the future shape of the telecommunications industry in the United States but also on the

future role of the Bell Laboratories within it. The terms of the settlement are almost certain to include AT&T's separation of its ownership and management of the United States telecommunications network from its manufacturing subsidiary, Western Electric.

In a letter to the court supporting the request for a further postponement of the settlement, AT&T said last week that it had already bound itself to certain undisclosed conditions. There is increasing speculation that, when published on 2 March, these will be found to embody the reorganization of the corporation announced in August last year, involving separate management and accounting for the operating and manufacturing arms of the business. The future of Bell Labs, undecided then, is still in the air.

There is a sense in which the anti-trust suit by the Department of Justice has been overtaken by events, especially by the ruling of the Federal Communications Commission (see *Nature*, 11 September 1980) that companies wishing to supply terminal equipment cannot also manage the common carrier networks that connect them. This decision of what is known as the "Second Computer Inquiry" seems to have been the spur for the reorganization announced by AT&T last summer. Separately from the anti-trust suit against it, AT&T is applying to the courts to have the deadline for the reorganization decreed by the commission (1 March 1982) extended on the grounds that it cannot bring about the "biggest corporate reorganization in history" by then.

European Community

Squeezing grants

Brussels

Haggling among member states is likely to force down the increase in the budget proposed by the European Community for its scientific and technical training programme. Last Thursday, the member states' permanent representatives to the Community met for the second time and finally decided to allocate to it 8.8 million EUA (European Units of Account) or £4.5 million, which is 3 million EUA less than the original modest proposal. A final decision has still to be taken by the Council of Ministers, but this is expected within the next two weeks. Depending on how the European Community chooses to allocate grants, there will probably be the equivalent of about 340 scholarships.

While the United Kingdom was in favour of keeping the programme at its previous size of 4.5 million EUA, the French were insistent that it should be reduced. Such was their concern that the French felt unable to give their consent without calling Paris for permission. Other member countries were more worried about the number and size of the individual grants. Ireland was in favour of smaller grants for

more researchers while the Danes preferred the idea of devoting larger sums to contract researchers of a high quality.

The four-year programme is intended to give students and junior lecturers a chance to study in another part of the Community. This can be either in one of the joint research centres (Geel, Ispra, Karlsruhe or Petten) or in research institutions in another member state with whom the Commission has concluded research contracts. Those wishing to study at home will be forced to accept a cut in their grant of 25 per cent. About 320 grants were allocated in the last programme but since the new programme must include grants to Greek researchers, there will be no increase in the number available in the rest of the Community.

Normally, grants are awarded for up to a year, but they may be extended to two years for those undertaking major research projects. Part of the aim of the programme, however, is to promote contracts between those responsible for the implementation of research programmes and the relevant education and training establishments. Details can be had from the Directorate-General for Research, Science and Education, Rue de la Loi, Brussels 1049.

Last week's meeting also decided on the budget for the next four-year research programme on the environment. The Commission's initial proposal of 51 million EUA was reduced to 42 million EUA. The programme includes the continuation of a major effort in the field of climatology and other areas covered are the treatment of sewerage sludge, air pollution and organic micropollutants in water. Here again, France was keen to see the budget cut, in this case to 35 million EUA. The Greek delegate spoke for seismological studies, which won agreement in principle. Formal research programmes are at present being examined in the Council of Ministers. **Jasper Becker**

UN energy conference

Prospects improve

Washington

Prospects are looking up for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, due to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, in August.

Last summer, the second meeting of the conference's preparatory committee found the secretariat's efforts so far behind schedule that postponement was seriously considered. In addition, the Kenyan government began to develop cold feet about the costs of staging a major international conference, the first since the 1979 Vienna meeting on science and technology for development, and to mutter about withdrawing its invitation.

But neither threat has materialized. And when a group meets in New York at the end of this month to process the reports of eight