

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