

## Eureka

**Optimism in France . . .**

"EXTREMELY satisfactory." That is how French research minister Hubert Curien described the results of the second ministerial conference on Eureka, the French-inspired initiative to develop new European high technology products, in Hannover last week.

The meeting decided on 10 projects, seven of which involve French participation. French officials were impressed that "the people who said no" to government finance of Eureka (which decoded means the British) are now saying "perhaps". Sir Geoffrey Howe, British Foreign Secretary, announced that British companies involved in Eureka projects could apply to the Department of Trade and Industry's £250 million annual "Support for Innovation Scheme", and said that he would not place an upper limit on the proportion of that fund that might be devoted to Eureka.

The French view, however, is in reality little different from the British. President François Mitterrand earlier this year announced that FF1,000 million would be devoted to Eureka in 1986, but it is now clear that none of this is new money, additional to the existing government research and development budget. According to Yves Sillard, the president of the French oceans and fisheries research council IFREMER and the man also responsible for the French Eureka projects, there will be no strictly new money in 1986. But more money could be provided later. As M. Hubert Curien, research minister, put it, there is now a line in the French research budget for Eureka, and this is politically defensible. M. Roland Dumas, foreign minister, stressed that the primary object of Eureka is to get new European technology on the market, thus emphasizing market pull rather than technology push—a point of view on Eureka adopted very early on by Britain.

According to Curien, the principal objective at Hannover was to make a list of projects, the first concrete plans, and that has now been achieved. With ten settled, fifteen more wait in the wings while detailed agreements are reached, and some 300 potential projects were on the table at Hannover, with many of them still in the running. "These are good days for Europe", Curien said.

These are, however, still honeymoon days for Eureka. No country or company has yet felt the pain of rejecting its own product in favour of one developed by outside companies under the Eureka label, which is what the logic of Eureka will ultimately demand. "There may be competing products even within Eureka", Curien added. "But we don't want the competition to lead to our losing the race with the United States or Japan."

According to Curien, Eureka will give

what would otherwise be merely a few bilateral or trilateral projects greater scale and greater speed than they would have outside Eureka. Eureka is accelerating what might have happened anyway, Curien said.

The controversial question of a secretariat for Eureka is to be decided, and the secretariat established, by 31 January next, but it should be small and "light", Curien said. Its location is not yet agreed, with countries divided roughly between those who support Brussels and a loose

connection with the European Commission, and those who do not. The French position is that the Commission's work and research should be treated as "complementary" to that of Eureka — which would argue, perhaps, for a Brussels base but not Commission domination of the Eureka secretariat.

Could multinationals be involved in Eureka projects? Yes, according to the French, if they had a base in Europe with independent power of decision. The role of countries beyond the 18 nations present at the Hannover meeting was not discussed, said Curien. Collaboration would not be ruled out but "Our object is clear. It is Europe, Europe." **Robert Walgate**

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**But who is going to pay?***Hannover*

In the eyes of the West German host delegation, the Eureka conference was a limited success. Both foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and research minister Heinz Riesenhuber praised the second Eureka conference as a "starting point for a progressive Europe".

Nothing of real substance was actually decided, it is admitted, but the 36 foreign and research ministers at least left with good intentions. For example, all were agreed that the third Eureka conference should take place next year in London. Following traditional EEC practice, discussion of the most urgent problems has been put off until then. The ministers also decided in principle to create a "small and flexible Eureka secretariat" — Britain and West Germany eventually agreeing to this French proposal. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and France's President François Mitterrand are backing Strasbourg as a location for the secretariat but there is also support for Brussels.

All participants agreed that Eureka projects should only serve civil purposes — in stark contrast to the original plans of the French, formulated after their refusal to take part in the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). West Germany rejected all military aspects knowing that only civil purposes of the planned research would find support in this country, although like Britain and Belgium, Germany intends to participate in both Eureka and SDI.

The ten projects most favoured in the initial list include all three suggested by West Germany. The ten are: high-power lasers for material processing; a computer network for European scientific research; investigation of atmospheric pollution independent of national borders; amorphous silicon for production of electricity from solar energy; superfast vector calculators; robots for the textile industry; biotechnology; optoelectronic production systems; diagnosis of sexual diseases, in particular AIDS; European standards for home and school computers.

But there is still a cloud hanging over Eureka — there was no agreement about how to finance these ambitious projects. France made a gesture of offering to put FF 1,000 million toward Eureka projects; the West German government has not yet decided on the level of its support, preferring industrial companies to initiate and finance the projects.

Meanwhile criticism has come from some circles within German industry. If the industry is to finance the projects, why is it the politicians who meet to select them? The president of the German Trade and Industry Association, Wolf von Amerongen, went as far as saying that industry has absolutely no use for Eureka. The government disagrees. **Jürgen Neffe**

**Refusniks appeal**

**LEONID Ozernoi, the Soviet Jewish astrophysicist who three years ago went on a protest fast coinciding with the eighteenth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) now seems to have lost faith in hunger strikes. In a message to the nineteenth General Assembly of IAU, which opens in New Delhi next week, Ozernoi says that his 1982 fast, and a similar, collective fast the following year with other refusniks seeking to emigrate to Israel had "disappeared without trace, like a black hole, in the depths of the Soviet emigration offices".**

**He adds that thanks to the support of friends in the Soviet Union and abroad, he has managed to stay out of prison or mental hospital and has not lost his job. But "nobody can be sure".**

**Ozernoi asks the participants at the IAU meeting to "raise [their] voices in protest against the retention of the refusnik scientists in the Soviet Union". To those who consider such appeals "inappropriate in the fight for peace", he says that silence will be interpreted as tacit support for Soviet attitudes towards the refusniks.**

**Vera Rich**