Hard times for Polish industrial researchers

- Government science funding overhauled
- Basic research fares well by comparison

Warsaw

POLAND's industrial researchers, accustomed to guaranteed state subsidies, will next year come face to face with the harsh reality of market economics. With the entire Polish budget for scientific research in the hands of a single powerful committee that is determined to protect basic research from the worst of the spending cuts required as Poland's nascent market economy struggles to find its feet, 1992 will bring unemployment for many industrial scientists.

Since the fall of Poland's Communist regime, the machinery of government science funding has been overhauled in record time. The former separate science budgets of each ministry and the Polish Academy of Sciences have already been rolled together and given to a new state Committee for Scientific Research, set up last spring and chaired by neurophysiologist Witold Karczewski. Whether this rapid progress continues now depends on the Polish parliament's efforts to form a coalition

IMANISHI-KARI AFFAIR

Baltimore resigns

DAVID Baltimore, the embattled president of Rockefeller University, announced early this week that he would resign his position at the end of the month. In a 2 December letter to the Rockefeller board of trustees, Baltimore wrote that the continuing misconduct investigation focused on the 1987 *Cell* paper he co-authored with Tufts University researcher Thereza Imanishi-Kari had "created a climate of unhappiness among some in the University that could not be dispelled". In the last four months, two prominent scientists and sometime critics — Nobel Laureate Gerald Edelman and diabetes researcher Anthony Cerami — have left Rockefeller for other institutions.

"When I accepted the position of President of this institution [in July 1990], I did not anticipate that [the *Cell* paper] matter would become such an extended personal travail for everyone involved," Baltimore wrote. "Trying to govern the University under these conditions has taken a personal toll on me and my family which I can no longer tolerate." He said that he hopes to return to AIDS research at the university, where he will remain a professor. Rockefeller professor Torsten Wiesel will take over as acting president while a search committee looks for a permanent replacement. Christopher Anderson

government, after October's inconclusive elections.

The Sejm, the lower house of the parliament, will try to appoint a prime minister on 5 December. One fear is that the wheeler-dealing may result in the gift of Karczewski's job — which carries ministerial rank — to a career politician lacking Karczewski's expertise in science policy.

Karczewski's committee (known by its Polish abbreviation, KBN) is an unusual hybrid, with two-thirds of its members elected in a poll of some 30,000 active PhD-level researchers, and the remainder appointed by government. All of Poland's researchers, whether in universities, the institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences or laboratories attached to the health, environment, agriculture or industry ministries, must now look to KBN for their financial support. Given the severe economic recession now gripping the country, many scientists are concerned about their job security. But it is Poland's more than 4,000 industrial scientists who have the most to fear, as KBN is forced to tighten its purse strings.

Karczewski has already had to cut KBN's planned budget for 1991 by more than 30 per cent (from around \$1,000 million) and next year's budget may be even tighter, as Poland's annual inflation rate hovers around 50 per cent and the national budget deficit grows. A new scheme of competitive grants to reward Poland's best researchers has so far suffered the brunt of the cuts — slashed to around \$50 million, about a quarter of the sum planned by KBN. But Karczewski wants to expand this scheme (eventually to consume half of the Polish science budget), and warns that KBN is no longer prepared to pay the basic running costs for institutes ranked poorly in an assessment of all Polish laboratories, completed earlier this year. Many of the lowest-ranking institutes were from the 150 or so laboratories linked to Poland's state-owned industries.

"We should certainly protect basic science," says Karczewski, who points out that most of the institutes of the Academy of Sciences, the stronghold of Polish basic science during the Communist era, scored well in KBN's ranking list. "But we can't protect everybody, and we're not willing to." Karczewski's right-hand man, undersecretary of state Jan Krsysztof Frackowiak, expects the industry ministry to close some 30 industrial laboratories over the coming year, after they are denied

funding by KBN.

Karczewski is quick to dismiss any suggestion that KBN — which is dominated by researchers from academic institutions — is unfairly targeting industrial research for cuts. In a market economy, industrial research should be paid for by its users, he says: if a particular industry requires research denied funding by KBN, then it should finance the work. Frackowiak believes that, under the Communist regime, less than 30 per cent of state-supported industrial research was tailored to meet industry's needs. To illustrate his point, he describes the development by one research group of an advanced car-braking system — a technology that already existed in the West and was not even needed by Poland's low-technology car manufacturers.

Other researchers are more openly critical of the standard of Polish industrial research. Andrzej Ziabicki, from the Academy of Sciences Institute for Fundamental Technological Research in Warsaw, and a leading advocate for rapid reform, dismisses most industrial research institutes as "little more than design shops".

Peter Aldhous

Nature Genetics

Nature, the international journal of science, plans to publish a supplementary journal, *Nature Genetics*, beginning in April 1992. The new journal is intended to cater for the publication of the substantial volume of research expected to flow from present interest in the better understanding of the human genome.

To that end, *Nature Genetics* will consider for publication research articles in human genetics proper, both clinical and otherwise, studies of the genomes of other organisms likely to have a bearing on the human genome and studies in human genetics involving a degree of detail that could not be accommodated in *Nature* on editorial grounds, perhaps because they include detailed genetic maps or nucleotide sequences. In particular, the new journal will include research papers longer than are normally included in *Nature*.

Nature Genetics will aim at the highest editorial standards, but its editorial management will be separate from that of *Nature* except in one respect: the authors of articles submitted to *Nature* but not accepted for publication for lack of space will be offered the opportunity of publication in *Nature Genetics*, often without further recourse to referees. It is expected that most submissions will be directly to *Nature Genetics*.

Nature Genetics will be based in Washington; the Editor is Dr Kevin Davies, previously a member of *Nature*'s biology staff.

Subscription details will be published at a later stage.