

ahead perhaps. No wonder that the politicians chose not to mark the occasion with some great Eurospectacle, say Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on Ice, nor even with another confusing row about the Common Agricultural Policy. Yet confusion persists. What is the consortium of the twelve signatories of the Maastricht Treaty now to be called?

Confusion begins with the formal title of the treaty, which is the "Treaty on European Union". Its first sentence declares that its signatories establish among themselves a "European Union". So, henceforth, will the abbreviation "EU" stand for what used to be incorrectly called the "European Community" and correctly, if pedantically, the "European Communities", abbreviated as "EC"? One answer is "YES"; another, unfortunately, is "NO, not always". And the present confusion is inseparable from past confusions, and in particular from the coexistence of three separate European communities.

The first of these was the European Iron and Steel Community, the second that known as Euratom. Then in 1957 the Treaty of Rome created the third "community", called the European Economic Community (abbreviated as "EEC"). Neither Maastricht nor the Treaty of Rome abolishes its precursors, some of whose separate functions still persist. (The agreement between the International Atomic Energy Agency on the monitoring of fissile material in Western Europe is with an inspection agency established by the Euratom Treaty, for example.) But the Treaty of Rome also created the European Commission, which has become Europe's executive branch of government with important legislative functions; it promulgates European legislation approved by the European Council (representing member states' governments) and the European Parliament. Under Maastricht, the commission, the council and the parliament (not to mention the European Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors) have the same status with respect to each of the three precursor treaties.

So what is the difference between the "European Union" and the "European Community"? Formally, it must reside in the functions allowed under Maastricht, but not foreseen by the Treaty of Rome and its two precursors. (Maastricht's agreement on monetary union consists exclusively of amendments to the Treaty of Rome and so is the concern of the old EEC, now called the European Community.) These are the arrangements for evolving a common foreign and security policy and for collaboration on legal matters such as immigration and crime detection. On both issues, the European Council is in charge, the European Commission has a lesser role than usually. In other words, if there were to emerge a common policy on Bosnia (the chance is slim), that would be a business for the EU. So, too, would be a decision that policemen from one country could be drafted to another in emergencies. But a decision that coinage of the intended European currency should carry the head of, say, Charlemagne, would be one for the European Community (EC). So, too, would a decision that there should in future be a category of scientist known as "principal investigator" whose members would alone be entitled not to pay tax on grants received. It is hoped that so much will henceforth be crystal clear. □

## Structural Biology

**The appearance of another new journal linked with *Nature* offers great opportunities.**

NEXT year, *Nature* will be launching a second sister journal, called *Nature Structural Biology*—a companion, as it were, for *Nature Genetics*. The purpose, an explanation of which follows, is primarily to provide an outlet for the many excellent contributions to structural biology which are sent to *Nature* for publication, but for which there is at present no room. But as in the relationship between *Nature* and *Nature Genetics*, it will be for authors and not editors to determine the eventual placing of their research articles.

Specifically, contributions in structural biology submitted for publication to *Nature* will be refereed in the usual way. As in the past, many will be published in the weekly journal. But authors of research articles judged technically sound but for which there is no room, or which appear more suited for a specialized audience, will be asked whether they wish their contribution to be considered for publication in *Nature Structural Biology*. There will be some advantages, notably the avoidance of further delay, but authors will have an absolute right to refuse. Readers of *Nature* proper will also be given an account each month of what *Nature Structural Biology* has to say for itself.

But why not leave that task to the many journals, some specialized and some less so, already active in the field? That is a natural question to which there are several answers. First, it may be of some benefit to the research community that the electronic techniques for rapid publication used by *Nature Genetics* should be applied in another field. Second, experience has shown that there is particular benefit in even specialized journals that mix together comment and research reports. Third, journals such as *Nature Structural Biology* are likely to be relevant, but in ways that cannot now be foreseen, to the electronic distribution (as distinct from publication) of research reports. But these sister journals bring to *Nature* and its readers the benefit that the distinction between what can and cannot be published is less arbitrary, even invidious. Especially in rapidly growing fields such as genetics and structural biology, it is disheartening that so much excellent research must be returned in the mail.

It is bound to get worse before it can get better. The causes of the present boom in structural biology are easily identified. Technical developments such as the crystallization of macromolecules, the automation of X-ray diffraction analysis, the provision of synchrotron light sources and even the scanning tunnelling microscope have helped to show how the function of many macromolecules is a function of their shape. The other side of that coin is that attempts to predict the real-life shapes of molecules of biological importance from a knowledge of the way they are put together from smaller units are no longer quixotic assaults on the impossible. *Nature Structural Biology* will, like *Nature* itself, take a special interest in the light that structural studies throw on the functioning of important molecules in biology. □