

# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Retreat on Drugs

THE British Government is about to abandon its traditional position on the treatment of drug addiction in the United Kingdom, and to go part of the way to meeting the recommendations of the Brain Committee on Drug Addiction which reported in 1965. In particular, the government will arrange for addicts to be treated at regional centres and not, as at present, supplied with drugs by general practitioners. There is, however, no intention at this stage of making treatment in regional centres compulsory as the Brain committee recommended.

The statement of the British Government's intentions was made in the House of Commons on January 30 when Miss Alice Bacon, Minister of State at the Home Office, agreed with critics of the present position that new legislation would be necessary. Earlier the Minister of Health, Mr. Kenneth Robinson, said that there were now apparently 1,000 people addicted to drugs such as heroin and morphine, an increase of more than a factor of two since 1959 (when there were 454 addicts known to the Home Office). Although the number of addicts in Britain is still small compared with that in the United States and Canada, the rate of increase in recent years has worried the authorities as well as their critics. Although the effects of other drugs such as hallucinogens may be less damaging to an individual than those of heroin and morphine, there is at least reason to suspect that increasing use of these drugs among young people may eventually lead to increasing numbers of adult addicts to the drugs officially classified as dangerous.

To study these questions, the Minister of Health is proposing to establish a research unit at the Institute of Psychiatry of the Maudsley Hospital. As yet there seems to be no approved pattern for the centres at which treatment for drug addiction will be provided. In the debate in the House of Commons the government was criticized for failing to recognize how much financial support would be necessary if the problem is to be treated energetically. More should be known on these matters when legislation is introduced in the early summer.

## Budget for Science

THE balance of public support for science and technology in the United States will not be markedly affected by the budget for the fiscal year 1967-68 published in Washington on January 26. The predicted reduction of the cost of space research and development during the fiscal year from \$5,600 million to \$5,300 million is cancelled out by the increase of defence research and development expenditure, which is expected to increase from \$6,700 million to \$7,200 million. Support for the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health will be modestly increased, as will be the research spending of the United States Department of Agriculture. The most striking feature of the budget, however, is the way in which the United States Government is now embarked

on schemes for controlling the environment, natural and artificial. Although much of this work cannot at present be labelled either as research or development, its growth cannot fail to have important consequences for science.

During the fiscal year to 1968, total expenditure on research and development will amount to \$16,147 million, which is divided almost equally between civil and defence research and development. In the three years 1965-68 expenditures under these heads, together with the expenditure of research and development (as such) by the big spending agencies, are given in the budget as follows:

	1966	1967 (est.)	1968 (est.)
NASA	5,350	5,310	5,126
NIH	536	630	662
NSF	176	196	226
Total civil	6,949	7,175	7,180
Total military	7,890	8,381	8,967
Total, civil and military	14,839	15,555	16,147

These figures do not include the \$151 million which the National Science Foundation will spend in 1967-68 on the development of new curricula for teaching science in schools and on other educational activities such as the retraining of teachers. With the growth of other activities, and particularly of the processing and handling of information, the total expenditure of the National Science Foundation will amount to \$455 million (compared with \$395 million in 1966-67).

The increase in the estimated expenditure of the Department of Defense on research and development is largely accounted for by the work now being undertaken to develop a more effective ballistic missile to be launched from a submarine. This same project accounts for some of the expected increase in the budget of the Atomic Energy Commission, although that is partly offset by a reduction in the cost of nuclear space rockets and other devices. The cost of space research and development is being reduced now that the principal expenditure on the lunar landing programme lies in the past, but the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is being given \$82 million to embark on further studies of more distant objectives.

The steady increase in the expenditure of the United States Government on environmental studies and the management of natural resources goes back for at least a decade. In 1968 the Administration is proposing to spend \$3,538 million on projects ranging from the desalination of water (\$28 million) and the control of water pollution (\$229 million) to the management of fish and wildlife resources (\$139 million) and the conservation of soil (\$104 million). Expenditure on new transport techniques and the modern planning of cities is also increasing; for example, some \$250 million will be spent in 1968 on "special projects in model cities". It is expected that some seventy cities will be involved in this programme during the financial year for which plans are now being made.

## Transatlantic Comparisons

THE danger that some European scientists may be affected by "an unjustifiable sense of inferiority" in respect of the United States was one of the themes of an address to the Royal Society of Arts in London on January 30 by Sir Gordon Sutherland, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and previously pro-