TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIPS

EMBO's Third Year

EMBO is increasing its activity on all fronts and the third list of EMBO long-term fellowships and senior appointments, announced on October 4 and tenable during the academic year 1968/69, is noticeably longer than either of its predecessors (see *Nature*, **215**, 1224; 1967). For the year 1968/69 EMBO awarded eighteen new fellowships and renewed five, and made two new senior appointments and renewed three. By contrast, in 1967/68 EMBO supported only twenty scientists in all. Following the first aim of the organization—fostering molecular biology in Europe—twenty-one of the awards went to Europeans for work in their own laboratories or elsewhere in Europe or Israel, two went to support Europeans working in the USA and four to bring to Europe people working in American laboratories, though not all of them are Americans. Even with its existing funds EMBO can obviously provide a small channel through which molecular biologists can be attracted back to Europe, but if the governments of the member nations were all sufficiently far-sighted and put up the funds for an EMBO laboratory, the trickle could be turned into a flow.

Inevitably the outstanding European centres such as Brussels, Geneva, the Institut Pasteur, the Weizmann Institute, Gif-sur-Yvette and two or three of the MRC's laboratories are prominent in the list, but it is encouraging to see that several of the EMBO fellows are working in much less august laboratories. It is also good to see that although no East European country has joined EMBO as yet, this has in no way barred individuals from East Europe from the fellowships; awards this year went to three Czechs, a Pole and a Yugoslav.

Needless to say, more EMBO fellows—twelve of the twenty-eight—are working with bacteria or bacteriophage than with any other system, but it is a sign of the times that four are involved one way or another in immunochemistry. The research interests of EMBO fellows are probably a general reflexion of the strong points of European molecular biology; that would certainly explain the absence of any reference in any of the fellowship lists to animal viruses.

Apart from fellowships and senior appointments, EMBO has spent its funds, the large grant from the Volkswagen Foundation and much smaller sums from Interpharma and the Israeli Government, on short term travel grants and collaborative work which have involved 66 visits between laboratories in fifteen countries. This is almost double the previous year's activities which involved 35 laboratories in twelve countries.

The grant from the Volkswagen Foundation, of course, expires this year but at the beginning of the year a draft of an agreement was drawn up by which the governments of the EMBO signatory nations would take over the financial support of the organization. At times during the summer there were many doubts as to whether this agreement would ever be implemented, but in the past two or three weeks all the governments concerned have finally accepted the agreement in principle and it is understood at the Department of Education and Science that there will be a formal signing ceremony in Berne in the near future. The amount of money each government will contribute, however, has yet to be decided, and if Cern is anything to go by there is a great deal of hard bargaining still in store.

PROTON ACCELERATORS

Half Steam Ahead at Cern

THE meeting of the Cern council on October 3 seems to have been a fairly subdued affair. Most delegations seem to have been working on the assumption that the project to build a new accelerator will go forward even though only five of the signatories of the convention now in force have so far indicated their willingness to subscribe to the bigger project. So far as the new machine is concerned, the chief business seems to have been the presentation by Professor B. Gregory, Director-General at Cern, of a document which embodies a cheaper programme of machine development than the one originally put forward by the European Committee on Future Accelerators.

At the beginning, at least, the capital cost of the programme now suggested works out at 1,335 million Swiss francs, compared with 1,776 million Swiss francs in the original scheme. The cost of the machine itself—the magnets and the hole in the ground—is reduced from 931 million Swiss francs to 870 million Swiss francs, but the result is quite significant for would-be experimenters—the maximum energy will be reduced to 200 GeV and the beam current will be reduced to a fifth of that originally intended, or to 2×10^{12} particles a second. A considerably larger saving, proportionately, comes from the economies which have been suggested in the laboratory facilities. Perhaps the most important of these is that there will now be only one ejection point, not two as originally suggested. Still larger economies have been made by cheapening the ancillary facilities—lecture halls and the like—which were a part of the original design, as well as by planning for a somewhat less intensive programme of operation than the one originally budgeted for. The consequences of the difficulties of financing the 300 GeV machine should be recognizable for many years to come.

The next step, agreed upon at Geneva, is to pick a site. The council meeting last week apparently agreed that there should be a preliminary vote on the subject at the December meeting, and on present form it seems that the council will have to choose between the sites on offer by the five willing partners—France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Belgium. The hope is that a final decision will be made in the spring next year, by which time progress should have been made in the selection of a director-general for the new laboratory. One intriguing possibility is suggested by the council's determination last week that it should find the best man for the job, whatever his nationality. Does this imply that the appointment could be made outside the five countries at present in the new club? How will the Scandinavian countries move in the months ahead? And what, in any case, is to be made of the fact that Professor Brian Flowers, the British delegate to last week's council meeting, was able to convey a message from the Secretary of State for Education welcoming "the positive decisions" which have been taken by the members of Cern? Although the issue of a British subscription to the machine is at present quite dead, 1969 could remain a full year for accelerator diplomacy.