

but while his speech was generally congratulatory, there were certain undertones of what may be called echoes of 1968. His stand against "neutrality" among scientists, his urging that members of the academy should be at the same time committed to the aims of the Party, and his emphasis on the close integration of research with the development of socialist society tend to suggest that in spite of the cordial greetings from the Party on this jubilee occasion, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences is still causing the authorities a certain amount of unease.

#### EXHIBITION

### Scientist for Mankind

THE current exhibition of the life and work of the late J. D. Bernal at the St Pancras Library, London, is an interesting but fragmentary tribute to this fascinating man and his many political and scientific interests. Born in Ireland at the turn of the century, he was aware from a very early age of the grave inequalities in human conditions. His concern with the role of science in society is well brought out in the exhibition, and his political interests, ranging from socialism in the 1920s to his involvement in the World Peace Movement and in the campaigns for nuclear disarmament in the 1950s and 1960s, are also clearly presented.

Professor Bernal was one of the founders of X-ray crystallography and he was one of the first to apply the technique to the study of biological molecules. In particular he is known for his work on the structure of liquid water, which was carried out in collaboration with his students and colleagues in the biomolecular group at Birkbeck College, University of London. This section of the exhibition, however, lacks coherence and it is a little difficult to follow chronologically. But the exhibition should certainly stimulate interest even in the non-scientist. Bernal possibly judged his political and social writings to be more important than his research: "The scientific work that I can do can be done and will be done by others but unless the political work is done there will be no science at all." His work for peace brought him into contact with many people outside the scientific and political communities.

A lighter side is provided by the comment of J. B. S. Haldane,

"Professor Bernal

Is not eternal

He may not escape from

The next bomb."

This was presumably prompted by Professor Bernal's amazingly accurate predictions of bomb damage during the war.

#### OPEN UNIVERSITY

### Confidence Restored

DR W. L. M. PERRY, vice-chancellor of the Open University, is confident that the credibility of the university has not been damaged by the disclosure last week that eight part-time tutors had deliberately passed some students at a summer school because they disagreed with the examination. Dr Perry did add, however, that he was unable to comment in detail on the case until he had read the full report of the incident which he had not yet received.

The incident happened at a social science summer school where the students were set a one-hour general essay. The university emphasized, after the incident was disclosed to the public in *The Teacher*, that only 400 of the 5,000 students who are taking the

foundation course in social science attended this particular summer school and that there were only about 20 borderline cases. The examination papers of these students have now been re-marked.

The university emphasizes that the summer school grade is only used in the overall assessment of a student's work when the continuous assessment throughout the year and the result of the end of year examination are at variance. The university also points out that there are two external examiners for the social science foundation course.

The university, which relies on regular part-time tutors to provide an assessment of the work of its students during the year, keeps a close eye on these tutors through the senior staff who sometimes attend the tutorials and also approve the manuscripts which the past three tutors have marked.

#### MEDICAL CENTRE

### Centre for Sussex

from a Correspondent

A PLANNED medical research centre at the University of Sussex will probably be the most ambitious venture in interdisciplinary activities yet to be undertaken by the university. The centre, which will be autonomous and will have its own building, will bring a variety of research activities under one roof. Plans for a 1,000-bed hospital to be built near the university campus have helped to influence the decision to set up the centre.

The importance of having a unified centre for medical research cannot be over-emphasized. It is more than 90 years since T. H. Huxley pleaded for close links between theoretical biology and practical medicine but the lesson, it seems, still has to be learned. Lord Zuckerman's recent comment on cancer research is sufficient evidence for this (see *Nature*, 240, 4; 1972).

A great deal of work on medicine is done at the university within the School of Biological Sciences. This work ranges from endocrinological studies to developmental genetics; from research on the behaviour of malarial mosquitoes to the mechanisms of cell division and the metabolism of cancer cells. Although the clinical application of this work is clear, the new centre will make communication easier between the practitioners and biologists.

Biomedical engineering is a thriving topic in the School of Applied Sciences at Sussex, and relations with doctors and surgeons are already established. A large part of the new centre's activities will be concerned with artificial heart valves, tubes with a range of intracorporeal applications, such as oeso-

phageal replacement, studies on the feasibility of artificial fallopian tubes, life support systems and devices for vibration activated dilation — work at present undertaken in the biomedical engineering department.

Behavioural and medical research will be brought together in the new centre, probably to a greater extent than has been previously achieved. Questions about the socio-environmental and the behavioural aspects of patient care on the one hand, and those ethical considerations which are increasingly entering into medical discussions on the other, have usually been neglected. More often than not they have never even been appreciated. The Centre for Social Research at the university already investigates problems of the provision of health care, the study of psychosomatic factors in the aetiology of certain diseases and the relationship between the type of nursing and its effect on the psychiatric patient. These studies will be included in the new centre.

Complex ethical questions are now firmly embedded within the matrix of contemporary medicine, and a small international group, focusing on relevant ethical and legal questions, is already being coordinated from Sussex. This group has representatives from such disparate countries as the USA and Czechoslovakia, with the promise of additions from the Far East. Thus another research area in the centre will be examining ethical considerations as they relate to new progress in medicine and the life sciences.

The challenge of the centre is the promise of interesting work bearing on real, living problems, together with an opportunity to see just how successful such a multi-disciplined, and outwardly-orientated, group of people can be.