

that would prevent these things from ever having been used".

Following apparent complaints from State Department officials about the possible implications of the secretary's comments, the "Voice of America" added a statement to the interview reaffirming the United States's renunciation of biological and toxin weapons. It explained that "retaliation in kind" meant "redressing the imbalance through the development of an adequate protective posture".

**David Dickson**

## International nuclear agency

### Changing sides?

#### Stockholm

The man who led the campaign in Sweden in 1980 to reduce nuclear power to only a stopgap option, to be abandoned when renewable energy sources become economic, has been appointed Secretary General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The primary role of IAEA — a United Nations agency — has been to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy: a role which has given it a prominent part in the debate over energy supplies to the Third World and potential nuclear proliferation. So the appointment last week of Dr Hans M. Blix, 58, Sweden's deputy foreign minister and an environmentalist, is somewhat controversial.

Until 1978 Blix was a senior civil servant specializing in international law — in which he earlier held a professorship. But with the collapse of the 1976 conservative government he was drawn into politics on behalf of the Liberal Party. As deputy foreign minister he has concentrated on Sweden's aid to developing countries, making Sweden one of the few to reach the United Nations target of 1 per cent of gross national product. It is this interest and success with the Third World which has no doubt won him the secretary generalship of the IAEA.

In the 1980 referendum on nuclear power in Sweden, Blix campaigned for the winning "middle line": increasing the number of nuclear power stations from 6 to 12 in the next few years, but then holding the number at 12 if alternative sources such as solar power or biomass (a realistic option in Sweden with its vast number of trees) are then viable.

However, Blix said this week in an interview with the Stockholm newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* that he did not see IAEA as a place to peddle his own views. His job will be to implement what can be agreed. He failed to mention that what can and cannot be agreed is, to a degree, under the influence of the IAEA secretary general.

There were three areas that IAEA should pursue, he said. First, its traditional role of furthering the peaceful uses of nuclear power — though he would like to see more nations adhering to the non-proliferation

treaty. Blix is greatly interested in the idea of the creation of a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Although he has made no public comment yet on the question of the use and international control (through IAEA) of the French reactors supplied to Iraq and recently bombed by Israel for fear of Iraq developing nuclear weapons, he did say in the interview that the control of nuclear power was "very important" — and that that control works very well today.

The second area in which IAEA should give assistance is in nuclear safety, both in reactors and waste disposal, Blix said: here there should be an international exchange of experience and a degree of open debate. "I came to realize the importance of this during the Swedish referendum", he commented. The third role for IAEA was support of developing countries in the

### More science cuts

#### Washington

Further proposed cuts in American science programmes are expected to be announced shortly following President Reagan's announcement of an across-the-board cut of 12 per cent in the discretionary spending budgets of all federal agencies.

Basic science did relatively well in the President's original budget proposals to Congress in March, which envisaged keeping research spending virtually constant in real terms. The new round of cuts, made necessary by indications that even the original cuts were not likely to be sufficient to satisfy the Wall Street bond market, mean that spending on science in real terms would drop by at least 10 per cent in the fiscal year which begins on 1 October, the first drop since 1974.

Individual agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), have yet to decide precisely where the cuts would fall. But the magnitude of the cuts — about \$600 million in the case of NASA — means that many research projects would inevitably be terminated.

In high energy physics, for example, Dr Sidney Drell, deputy director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center and chairman of the Department of Energy's high energy physics advisory panel, said on Monday that the result would probably mean about a 20 per cent reduction in the level of operations. He expected hundreds of personnel to be laid off from the country's national laboratories, and that many planned experiments would not now take place.

Addressing a meeting of the panel, the President's Science Advisor, Dr George A. Keyworth, said that the new rounds of cuts made his earlier remarks about the need to choose priorities for the support of science "even more relevant today than three months ago". **David Dickson**

analytical and other uses of radionuclides.

Carl Tham, Swedish spokesman at IAEA, said this week that more important than Dr Blix's position during the Swedish referendum was his immense experience in international relations. **Robert Walgate**

## Heidelberg cancer centre

### Neurath's case

Dr Hans Neurath, whose resignation as Director of the German Cancer Research Centre at Heidelberg was announced in June (see *Nature* 20 August, p.665 and subsequent correspondence 24 September, p.252), gave the centre's board of trustees a critical and even bitter explanation on 23 September. In his statement, Dr Neurath said that he had found it impracticable to carry through agreed proposals for running the centre because of the circumstances, "structural, scientific and concerning personnel", at the centre.

Dr Neurath's departure from the centre will take effect on 31 December. In his statement to the board of trustees, he noted that his appointment had been made so that he could improve the quality of cancer research at Heidelberg and "bring it up to an international standard".

In reality, the statement continued, he had found the institution to be "plagued by serious and perhaps irreconcilable conflicts of interest", largely stemming from an "old established majority". Dr Neurath said that his impression was that "procedural questions and administrative and legal arguments" have priority over scientific work, and that scientific leadership is impeded by over-literal interpretations of the centre's charter.

Dr Neurath also said in his statement last week that he had been denied the active support both of the trustees to whom his statement was addressed and of the representatives of government ministries. He complained that those concerned had supported him by words and not by deeds, thus undermining the prospects for his success as director.

The statement added that Dr Neurath decided to resign in the hope that such a drastic step might contribute to reform.

## Polish higher education

### Bill progressing

Poland's controversial new bill on higher education is to go forward for discussion by the Council of Ministers "without essential changes". So promised the Minister for Science, Higher Education and Technology, Dr Jerzy Nawrocki in a statement intended to put an end to "unjustified fears and extreme protest movements".

The protests, which have now spread to virtually all universities and higher educational institutions in Poland, were triggered off by the last-minute changes