

to make radical changes in research funding. At the same time, the unequal way in which government-funded research centres are concentrated in the more prosperous Flemish half of the country is the source of bitter complaints from the French-speaking Walloons.

The present escalation of the language war comes in response to the threat of major closures in the steel industry of the already economically depressed Wallonia, and has led Walloons to seek out other injustices to attribute to the present Flemish dominated coalition government.

Belgium has three national research centres, the Centre pour Energie Nucleaire at Mol in Flanders and the Institut de Radioéléments and the Institut National des Industries d'Extraction, both in Wallonia. Eighty-seven per cent of all the government subsidies in question are spent at Mol if the employment created by the nuclear research centre in related industries is taken into account. The last coalition government attempted to redress the balance, at least in terms of energy research, by favouring the coal industry. But this still left 70 per cent of government research funds being spent on nuclear energy compared with 6 per cent on extractive industries. Philippe Maystadt, Science Minister in both the present and previous governments, seems to have done little to soothe Walloon anger since increased expenditure on nuclear energy and solar energy mainly benefits Flanders.

The bad blood between Walloon and Flemish scientists is overshadowed by the crisis facing universities throughout Belgium. A law passed in 1971 lays down that universities are allocated a certain sum of money for each student and out of this the university has to pay for administration, teaching and research. Maystadt ruled out specialist centres for postgraduate research as an unjustifiably expensive way of funding research for a small country.

Research is thus left largely under the control of the university authorities, loosely supervised by a ministerial and an interministerial committee for science policy. In 1981, the universities spent BFr 25,000 million (£290 million) compared with BFr 15,000 (£170 million) million at other national or international research centres. This has led the universities into a trap with administrative and other running costs rising above the price indexation system and the allocations per student falling below the index increase. The universities have therefore started to cut back on research spending.

With the policy of budgetary restraint being followed by the present government, the problem is worsening. Professor André Jaumott, ex-chancellor of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, wants universities to separate their teaching and research functions, with no budget restrictions.

Maystadt has other plans. His ministry has asked Belgian industry and the state

New broom in Spain

Barcelona

Professor Federico Mayor Zaragoza, the new Spanish Minister of Education and Science, is assessing the draft of a law for scientific and technical research which should provide a framework for scientific research in Spain, something that has been almost untouched since General Franco's time.

Professor Mayor is well versed in the higher education and science politics of Spain, having occupied many key posts: rector of the University of Granada, acting president of CSIC (the Spanish science research council), president of the "Comisión Asesora" (the main fund for research grants) and "sub-secretario" (vice-minister) of education and science. He is now professor of biochemistry at the Autonomous University of Madrid and director of the Institute of Molecular Biology which is a unit of the "Centro de Biología Molecular Severo Ochoa". He was elected MP for Granada in 1979, but later resigned to become deputy director-general of UNESCO.

According to the draft law, the government intends to specify who will formulate Spanish science policy, who will control the different levels of organization and how research will be financed. It puts research under the control of a secretary of state who will report directly to the prime minister. An advisory committee, mainly composed of scientists, will propose general plans and priorities and submit an annual budget for research to parliament.

No change will be introduced in the structure of research bodies such as CSIC but, to circumvent the fact that these bodies have only permanent staff, a new institution will be created, which will be a public company that will employ research staff and act as an auxiliary to research centres. This will also facilitate the exchange of scientists between research institutes and universities. The draft will be offered for discussion to research institutions before going to parliament. However, new elections will take place before March 1983 and it is unlikely that such a complex law would pass through parliament before then.

Pedro Puigdoménech

departments what their research requirements are for the coming five years. On the basis of this information, research contracts are being handed out mainly to medium-sized companies to undertake this sort of applied research. For 1980-82, BFr 1,000 million (£11 million) has been allocated on projects such as optic fibre technology for the Belgian PTT. Solvay, the Belgian chemical giant, should also benefit from funding for industry-oriented biotechnology.

Jasper Becker

Martial law in Poland

Fresh appeal

A former president of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Dr Janusz Groszkowski, has sharply criticized a group of more than 140 intellectuals and academics who last month sent to the Sejm (parliament) an appeal for the ending of martial law.

The letter, which was also addressed to the United Nations General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights, said that the imposition of martial law was contrary to the right of every nation to self-determination, and the freedom to determine its own political status and to ensure its economic, social and cultural development. This principle, it said, was the basis of the renewal movement which sprang up in Poland after August 1980. The letter particularly deplored "the attempts to divide the nation, setting workers against soldiers and the militia, the blockade of the means of communication in the whole country, the brutal breaking of workers' strikes by the militia and army, the internment of many thousands of people in prisons and camps. Cultural life, education and learning, it said, are being "paralysed", and the media rendered powerless.

Dr Groszkowski did not disagree with the content of the letter, nor with the demand that the authorities should "put an end to this confrontation with their own people". He felt, however, that the fact that such a letter was sent to the Sejm — a body which during the Gierek regime had totally lost the confidence of the Polish nation and indeed of the Communist party — did not give legitimacy to it. The Sejm, in its present form, is a creation of the Gierek period, now being exposed as an era of distortions and corruption. To approach an institution where people linked to the Gierek era are still active, was, he felt, "a serious political error".

Dr Groszkowski's letter reveals how little the reforms of the past 18 months have affected those in high places. In September 1980, a letter from Dr Groszkowski prompted the academy to call for major reforms in Polish political and academic circles from the Sejm downwards, to clean up political patronage and restore honesty and fair dealing to public life. Any appeal from Dr Groszkowski carries considerable weight among Polish academics — in 1976 he resigned as president of the academy when he was unable to gain legal redress for Mrs Aleksandra Hankus of the Krakow Technical University. Mrs Hankus had suffered 11 years of official harassment and almost a year in prison for libel after protesting, in 1964, that her research results had been stolen by a person enjoying political patronage who then went on to gain a doctorate on the strength of her work.

Vera Rich