

West German technology

Bonn says yes to Eureka and SDI*Hamburg*

THE prolonged and often acrimonious discussions about West German participation in the European Eureka project and the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) reached a climax in Bonn last week.

Under the chairmanship of Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), four ministers decided not to appropriate DM1,000 million for the Eureka project. This is what the Minister for Research and Technology, Heinz Riesenhuber (CDU), and the Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP), who had led the negotiations in Paris, had demanded as initial support over four years for West Germany's participation. At the same time, the Bundestag voted in favour of participation in SDI, although the details have yet to be worked out. Chancellor Kohl, who met President Reagan in New York last week, has informed himself on SDI through his adviser Horst Teltschick (CDU), who visited the United States last month to check the conditions for cooperation on SDI in general. Teltschick, like Josef Bugl, chairman of the federal Enquêtekommission für Technikfolgeabschätzung (commission for the estimation of the consequences of new

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technologies), advised that West Germany should offer financial cooperation with the United States.

The Bundestag rejected the draft contract proposed by the Social Democrats which included among other things the suggestions of scientists in Göttingen last year, including a complete prohibition of space weapons. In the debate, Josef Vosen, SPD spokesman on science policy, warned the government against "selling off" West German technology and specialists. He alleged that the United States intends to collect precious technology from other countries at low cost, and to use this at a later stage to put pressure on the Eastern bloc.

The Social Democrats clearly favour closer technological cooperation in Europe along the lines proposed by France in the Eureka project. The debate has thus been polarized along pro- and

anti-American lines. For SPD, independence from the United States is the objective. This is also why the SPD faction in the Bundestag supports the French initiative for the European shuttle Hermes. In this connection, they complain that the first German space project, based on the German-built but NASA-owned Spacelab, was partly hijacked by the Pentagon, which has arranged for a reduction of the scientific payload in favour of a reconnaissance satellite meant to keep

French research sociology

Research council sweetens mobility

THE notorious unwillingness of French researchers to change their jobs, and in particular to leave research institutes for work in industry, may be broken down by a scheme soon to be announced by Pierre Papon, director-general of the major French research council, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Papon's hope is that research directors will be more willing to encourage researchers to move temporarily to industry when he allows them to replace a seconded researcher by a new person.

CNRS has been battling with immobility since the election of the present government five years ago. People's attachment to their homes is traditional, but it had been hoped that the granting to government researchers of civil service status earlier this year, with the accompanying assurance that a scientist would always be entitled to reclaim his or her job after a spell elsewhere, would break the log-jam and even overcome people's fears that moving would exclude them from promotion opportunities.

But during 1985, only 50 of CNRS's 10,000 researchers have taken leave to work in industry for a year or longer. CNRS acknowledges that there has been a change in the spirit in which French researchers regard industrial contracts; they no longer turn up their noses at industrial opportunities, but instead compete for them. But CNRS now thinks it has identified a previously unsuspected impediment to mobility — the reluctance of research directors to let good researchers go.

Whence Papon's intended sweetener. Laboratories that lose a researcher to industry even temporarily will be allowed to recruit a permanent member to their staff, and may also be allowed to increase their intake of research students. On the face of things, the inducement should be more than enough to have directors ushering their researchers away to industry. Papon is even hoping to make the process still easier by using CNRS salary funds, which are paid over in advance by the government, to help people willing to move with

watch on Nicaragua.

Research Minister Riesenhuber, defeated in his plan to raise extra cash for Eureka by Finance Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg (CDU), will now have to take the money from his ministry's budget. Riesenhuber now says that the West German government can give help with grants to industry only when a project is close to the market. But the projects to be discussed at the Eureka conference in Hannover next week, such as environmental programmes and a European information data bank for scientists, are of general public interest and must therefore be eligible for federal support.

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bridging loans for the purchase of new houses, but there may be legal obstacles to this part of his plan.

Meanwhile, Papon is also hoping to make CNRS into a more self-conscious organization. Despite the growth of public support for research in the past five years, academic studies in science and technology policy have been neglected in France. The omission is especially strange because CNRS supports research in the social sciences and the humanities as well as in hard science.

One of Papon's initiatives is the preparation of a history of CNRS itself to mark its 40th anniversary in 1989. Another is a plan for a colloquium, to be held at Montpellier in January, to which science studies specialists from overseas will be invited, and which will attempt to hammer out a programme of research on the impact of science and technology on regional development, an important issue for the present government of France, which can boast of some success in decentralizing science and science-based industry to the regions.

Papon's explanation of why science policy studies have languished in France centres on the view that French institutions are less willing than their counterparts elsewhere to allow their private operations to be analysed. Jean-Jacques Salomon, director of the Centre Science, Technologie et Société at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris, one of the few French units of its kind, agrees with Papon but also points to the peculiar difficulties, in France, of building up research teams to work on short-term contracts.

Salomon's unit has only five full-time researchers, and Salomon says he has been pressing the government to give him more support. One problem is that present regulations do not allow him to employ researchers on external contracts for more than a year without offering them permanent positions. Another, Salomon says, is the lack of political will.

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