

Soviet Union

Scientists facing redundancy

MOST Soviet scientists will henceforth be paid in accordance with their job and performance. A recent joint decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Council of Ministers and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions approved new procedures and pay scales that will apply to more than half of all scientists and over 90 per cent of designers and technicians.

Although the new scheme has been presented as part of the Gorbachev package of reforms aimed at streamlining the economy, criticism in the Soviet media of the old system goes back a number of years. Under a set-up in which jobs and salaries depended strictly on academic qualifications and length of service, many scientists in the 35–45 age group, holding the degree of Candidate of Science (roughly equivalent to PhD), were actively or passively discouraged from improving their qualifications by taking a doctorate of sciences. In many cases, acquiring a doctorate would mean seeking work in another town, with consequent disruption to spouse's career and children's education. Scientists who wished, for their own personal satisfaction, to take a higher degree, and who were in some cases willing to continue temporarily in their old jobs and at their old salaries, were told that this would be detrimental to work discipline.

Under the new system, a degree or engineering diploma will be merely one of several criteria determining job and pay scales. From now on a scientist's pay will depend on the effectiveness of his or her research, its scientific and economic importance, and what Valentin Kharin, a senior official of the State Committee for Labour and Social Problems, described in an interview with the Moscow weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* as "personal impact" in getting concepts implemented in the economy. (The gap between research and implementation is a longstanding problem to the Soviet planners.) In particular, technicians and engineers without an academic degree seem likely to benefit. According to Mr Kharin, the new scheme will allow them to earn up to 350 rubles monthly, instead of the present maximum of 190 (the national average is around 170 rubles a month).

The new scheme makes likely the redundancy of up to 10 per cent of the present scientific work-force, with, Mr Kharin admits, some difficulty in finding new jobs for those who are dismissed. People who do not work, or who work badly, are liable to find themselves out of a scientific post, regardless of their length of service, he said. This is a remarkable development in Soviet terms. Unemployment was officially abolished in the Soviet

Union more than 50 years ago, and people without work are liable to find themselves facing prosecution for "parasitism" — being without visible means of support.

Compulsory retirement of senior scientists may be one way of weeding out the superfluous work force. Already, in Uzbekistan, the President of the local Academy of Sciences, Dr Abid S. Sadykov, has been eased out of his post. According to the Uzbek republic daily *Pravda Vostoka* (22 November 1985), by continuing in office for several years after

health and age (he is 72) made him unfit for duty, Sadykov had, by default, allowed corruption, nepotism and general slackness to creep into his academy. *Pravda Vostoka* noted disapprovingly that the average age of Uzbek academicians (75) is far too high and that more room should be made for younger talent. If this trend spreads, it could have important consequences for Soviet participation in world science. Attendance at foreign conferences has until now been viewed by the Soviets principally as a reward for long and faithful service. The Gorbachev efficiency drive could therefore produce a more flexible approach to foreign travel for younger scientists. **Vera Rich**

West German schools

Teachers swell dole queues*Hamburg*

UNEMPLOYMENT among West Germany's schoolteachers has become a scandal. The number has now reached 100,000, and is continuing to rise. The social cost is very large, given that a qualified teacher will have spent an average of six years at university, as well as perhaps two years at school practice (Referendariat).

Because of the waiting period of a year to eighteen months between university and Referendariat, the average age of qualifying teachers is as high as 30. Yet teachers are almost completely dependent on the state for jobs, in the person of the Kulturministers (the ministers for culture, education and church affairs) of the *Länder*. Fewer than one per cent of all teaching positions in West Germany are in private schools.

Several attempts are being made to solve the problems, but they are too late to help most teachers. Yet the present situation could have been foreseen many years ago from the crudest statistics. The Kulturministers had themselves published several documents giving calculations and predictions for the trends in supply and need of teachers, but nothing was done to prevent catastrophe. Until 1980, every newly qualifying teacher was assured of a post almost automatically. As civil servants, West German teachers are promised lifelong tenure.

The overproduction of teachers resulted from a campaign during the early 1970s when a shortage of schoolteachers of every type was emphasized. Too many students elected to become teachers, even when it became obvious that the shortages no longer existed. Even now, there are still too few teachers in some subjects, but the *Länder* do not want to spend more money in schools at which the numbers of pupils are decreasing sharply.

There have been protests from the teachers' professional organizations, chiefly the Gewerkschaft Erziehung und

Wissenschaft (Union for Education and Sciences) and the Deutscher Philologenverband (German Philologists' Society), but they represent only the employed teachers and there is little solidarity.

The ministers meet regularly, but they usually postpone discussion of this issue to their next meeting. They have not managed to answer even the most pressing question: how can the reduction of working hours — agreed for all civil servants during the union negotiations in 1984 — be applied to teachers? The absurd situation exists where one fewer teaching hour each week for all 590,000 teachers in post would provide jobs for 22,400 of their unemployed colleagues; education experts in both the Social Democratic and the Christian Democratic parties recommend such a reduction, but the civil servants have so far been successful in their opposition. They themselves are asking for more jobs to be created before they will agree to any kind of compromise.

The ministers, however, know that something must be done, even at this late stage. In Bavaria, all teachers over the age of 55 are to have their working week reduced by two hours. Nordrhein-Westfalia has given some applicants jobs for three-quarters of the time, but only on a three-year basis. Many unemployed teachers are, however, unwilling to give up jobs as taxi drivers, innkeepers, clerks or sales representatives only to face even bigger problems in three years' time.

At present, almost 5 per cent of West Germany's unemployed are teachers, but the proportion is growing dramatically. The vice-president of Munich University, Otto Speck, predicts an increase of 72,000 in 1986. The schools are facing "Vergreisung" (a growing percentage of older teachers), but the finance ministers of the *Länder* continue to argue that "teachers cannot be a privileged group among the unemployed". **Jürgen Neffe**