

to demand information on whether research at the university could be used for CBW purposes. British students are in an increasingly militant mood and, in looking for issues, there is no doubt that they find the question of research sponsored by the military particularly provocative.

The student appetite for information was whetted on 26 May when the *Sunday Observer* published a front page story under the headline "Biological warfare: Dons named," in which institutions carrying out research for the chemical and biological establishments at Porton were listed. As a source the story gave the testimony of the two establishment directors before the House of Commons select committee on science and technology. Particulars of the contracts were not given the committee, but reporters filled in some of the names and details by scanning university records and talking to scientists.

Since the report of the committee visit had not been published, the Speaker of the Commons promptly ruled that a question of parliamentary privilege was involved and the matter was referred to the committee on privilege. This committee has broad if seldom exercised powers and the case could conceivably lead to fines or even imprisonment for the journalists involved and disciplinary action for any member of the House who released information.

In the same week a dozen leading scientists, including three Nobel prize winners, Maurice Wilkins, C. F. Powell, and F. Sanger, associated themselves with a letter to the Prime Minister asking that the microbiological establishment at Porton be declassified and transferred to the Ministry of Health. This was the latest in a series of requests that control of Porton be shifted either to the Health Ministry or to the Medical Research Council. The last official response to such suggestions was on 31 May in the House of Lords when the government spokesman said that such proposals had been "considered more than once but the change has been deemed inappropriate."

The scientists take the view that the best way to affirm that Porton research is for defensive purposes is to remove the wraps of secrecy. There is little doubt that some also are disturbed by the workings of a cooperative agreement under which Britain exchanges information relevant to CBW with Canada, Australia, and the United States.

In the last week in May also, forma-

tion of an Anti-Chemical and Biological Warfare Group was announced at a meeting attended by members of several British peace organizations including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The initiative for the anti-CBW group seems to have come from a Devon housewife, Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, who organized a local movement when she grew alarmed at reports that the Army Research Establishment at nearby Nancekuke, Cornwall, was manufacturing CS gas and was being used as a testing station for CBW agents and equipment. Mrs. Compton says her aim is to find out what is going on and

how it is likely to affect those living in the area. Since Devon and Cornwall are national holiday resorts, she could expect the same sort of sympathy which might be generated in the United States by a report that nerve gas was being tested on Cape Cod.

The first major peace group protest against CBW occurred on the recent bank-holiday weekend when a Christian CND group held a very non-violent "vigil" at Porton. A spokesman for the National Peace Council told *Science* that he felt CBW protests were unlikely to take the form of mass demonstrations, at least in the near

## AEC Honors French Scientists

Atomic Energy Commission chairman Glenn T. Seaborg presented French scientists with a check for \$35,000 on 11 June for work done almost three decades ago which contributed to the early development of nuclear reactors. Although the monetary award was no doubt appreciated, the main object of the French scientists' quest—the formal recognition by the Atomic Energy Commission of the importance of the work they had done—was fulfilled by the presentation of appropriate citations at a luncheon held in Washington.

Two of the scientists honored, Lew Kowarski, senior scientist at CERN, and Francis Perrin, High Commissioner of France's Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, attended the ceremony. The other two scientists honored—Frederic Joliot and Hans Halban—are deceased; relatives of Joliot and Halban attended the ceremony to receive the award from Seaborg. Kowarski and the relatives of Joliot and Halban receive \$10,000 each; Perrin receives \$5,000.

The award ended a 14-year deliberation. In 1954, a request for an award for the French scientists was initiated before the Patent Compensation Board which decides on atomic energy matters for the U.S. government. In his statement at the ceremony, Seaborg pointed out the nature of the contribution which the men had made—beginning with the discovery of artificial radioactivity in 1934 by Joliot and Irene Curie for which they were awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Halban, Joliot, and Kowarski published the first report of neutron emission in the fission process and the three, along with Perrin, conducted experiments investigating the possibility of a divergent chain reaction in a homogeneous mixture of uranium oxide and light water. Their experiments with heavy water were interrupted by the 1940 invasion of France, at which time Halban and Kowarski were successful in escaping to England with the 180 liters of heavy water which composed the world's principal supply. A few months after their dramatic escape, Halban and Kowarski successfully carried out an experiment at Cambridge which led to their conclusion that a homogeneous heavy water-uranium mixture of appropriate size would support a chain reaction.

In addition to the money and the AEC citation, Seaborg presented a plaque to the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique. The ceremony marked the end of the French request for scientific recognition in this case, and, apparently, all parties, French and American, were pleased by the cordial manner in which it was conducted. The only thing that might have marred an otherwise enjoyable occasion for the French scientists was that—in accordance with U.S. government policy—an American wine was served at the ceremonial lunch.—B.N.