

to a visiting scientist from a nation that is well cemented into the Soviet bloc, he remarked to his Italian colleague, "Yes, but you have *fine* equipment in your laboratory.")

In other instances, the agitation takes a less ethereal form, and can be considered radical only in the context of Italy's incredible backwardness in public welfare measures. Thus, staff members of a psychology institute are looking for some means of making their views known in connection with a government bill to set up a system of pre-school education. No one in authority has sought their views, nor is there any established channel for presenting them. But, in the generally aroused atmosphere that now envelops the Italian scientific community, they are eager—though not optimistic about their prospects—to inject some contemporary thinking into the situation. Several years ago, it is generally agreed, the thought would not have occurred to them, and, if it had, they would not have bothered. Similarly, staff members at the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome, which approximately combines the functions of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, are agitating for the Istituto to have a more decisive role in the regulation of pharmaceutical drugs. What they would like to do is to replace the present perfunctory system—which is largely based on following FDA's lead and then looking into ensuing calamities—with screening methods based on clinical and pharmacological studies. Their chances of success, in a land noted as a pill-peddler's paradise, are widely acknowledged to be limited, but, again, the case is typical of interests proceeding beyond the traditional issues of money and working conditions.

Fate Uncertain

The sentiments aroused by these and related issues are now powerfully present, and, whether the specifics involved are supported, opposed, or ridiculed, figure large in the Italian scientific community, from the lab bench to the executive suites of government research agencies. One measure of success is that, in diluted fashion, the concept of reducing the spread in pay scales was incorporated into government-supported reform legislation, though, characteristically, the bill failed to make its way through Parliament; now that the government has been dissolved—for the 30th time since World War II—the fate of the measure is uncertain.

What is very certain, though, is that the evolution on policy matters within the Italian scientific community has been accompanied by a growing militancy among researchers, many of whom have come to believe that disruption is the only certain means of arousing the notice of their come-and-go governments. For example, in mid-December, following months of assemblies that brought research to a halt, scientists and technicians occupied the buildings of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità to protest what they considered to be maltreatment of the lower salaried levels in a parliamentary reform bill. Police forcibly removed over 100 persons from the premises, and charges of trespass on government property were brought against 77 of them. Among these were many who occupied full-fledged research positions in the multi-fariously tiered civil service job structure; this was somewhat unusual, since elsewhere occupations and demonstrations by professionals had rarely provoked police action.

The assemblies and demonstrations drew wide support, and even on the right side of the political spectrum it is often conceded that research is so poorly treated in Italy that there may be no alternative to mass action for reform. But the accompanying turbulence also had some painful personal results, among them the sudden walkout of the chairman of the physics department at the Istituto, Mario Ageno. As head of the department for the past 11 years, he had acquired a reputation for being nonautocratic, equitable in disposing of whatever rewards he was allowed to control, and keenly interested in high-quality research. Kind words are said about him in all camps, which is far from common. On 25 July, Ageno's laboratory was invaded by a group demonstrating on the issue of greater equality in salaries. Ageno himself, it is agreed by all, was as holy as any of them on this issue. But he decided at that point that he had had enough. He walked out of the Istituto and has never returned. "I resigned because it became impossible to work," he said in an interview. "Today we have a lot of people who call themselves scientists but who don't know anything about science. Professors no longer teach, students get degrees without having done any research. We have enough money for research. What we lack is organization and people who are interested in research, rather than social and political struggles. I was going to quit anyway,"

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **THERMAL POLLUTION:** The Justice Department has filed its first suit to halt thermal pollution. It charged the Florida Power and Light Company with overheating waters in Biscayne Bay, including an area encompassed by the Biscayne National Monument. The suit alleges that water used for cooling leaves the power plant about 10 to 20 degrees hotter, thus damaging marine life in the bay. The damage will be greater, the suit says, when two nuclear power plants now under construction are finished. The power company earlier denied the alleged damage at an Interior Department conference and refused to halt excavation of a drainage canal. The suit asks a submission to the court within 45 days of a plan to eliminate thermal pollution by the power plant and a halt to construction of the canal.

● **NEW PSAC MEMBERS:** President Nixon last week named five scientists to the President's Science Advisory Committee: Dr. Solomon J. Buchsbaum, vice president of research, Sandia Laboratories; Dr. Theodore L. Cairns, assistant director, Central Research Department, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co.; Dr. James S. Coleman, professor, Department of Social Relations, Johns Hopkins University; Dr. Val L. Fitch, professor of physics, Princeton University; Dr. Lloyd H. Smith, Jr., professor of medicine and chairman of the Department of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco Medical Center. The new members will serve until 1973. They will replace Dr. Ivan L. Bennett, Jr., New York University; Dr. Sidney D. Drell, Stanford Linear Accelerator Center; Dr. Charles P. Slichter, University of Illinois at Urbana; Dr. Charles H. Townes, University of California at Berkeley; and William R. Hewlett, Hewlett-Packard Company. Hewlett had resigned, and the terms of the others had expired.

● **AIRPORT ENVIRONMENT STUDY:** The Port of New York Authority has requested a study assessing the environmental and economic impact of extending the runways at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The study will be done by the Environmental Studies Board of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.