

ror" in claiming to represent all of China. The United States delegation voted against the expulsion of Taiwan and protested the action, but then joined in the unanimous vote for Chinese membership.

ICSU at its meeting reacted to the IUGS action by passing a multipart reso-

lution which started by recommending "that all the Scientific Unions of ICSU adhere to the principle of Universality of Science and not exclude from membership any community of scientists which effectively represent the scientific activity in a definite territory."

The resolution went on, however,

to express the Union's "eagerness to welcome into ICSU and the affiliated Unions, National Members representing the great scientific community of the People's Republic of China," and topped the resolution off on a slightly pained note by urging "IUGS to provide for participation in its work by the community of geologists in Taiwan." But for the present it is unlikely the geological union can do that.

The China question has become a chronic, intractable item on the agendas of international organizations. And for the two principal parties the issue carries a weight of historical and psychological complexity which outsiders do not always fully appreciate. Although it still has a long way to go in resolving the two Chinas issue, ICSU has been more fortunate in dealing with other difficult relationships. At times when either-or terms prevailed in most spheres, ICSU's membership has included, for example, both Germanies, both Koreas, and, until the fall of the Saigon regime, both Vietnams. Israel and Egypt are currently ICSU members, and South Africa and several black African countries are on the rolls.

In general, trends since the early days of the Cold War have been favorable to ICSU's following its principle of universality. The effects of East-West tensions are seen as having been most severe during the McCarthy era of the early 1950's, when travel by scientists in either direction was very difficult. An event remembered as having marked a milestone in scientific relations between Western and socialist countries was the U.S. government's issuance of visas to East German scientists to attend a meeting of one of ICSU's constituent unions in Berkeley, California, in 1963. By and large, the nations centrally involved in the Cold War tensions have relaxed the restrictions imposed in the 1950's. Three Cuban scientists, for example, were granted visas by the State Department to attend the Washington meeting. But in recent years, there have been some reversals. Countries such as Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan have been the targets of action in intergovernmental organizations, including Unesco. In his report to the Washington meeting, ICSU's outgoing president, Harrison Brown of Caltech, said that the principle of universality was "under enormous strain" during the past year. He pointed to the China conflict and also the actions at the Olympic games in Montreal this summer as jeopardizing the principle of universality, which has applied to athletics as well as science.

ICSU has a standing Committee on

## Briefing

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### First "Right-to-Die" Law Passes

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California has become the first state in the nation to enact what is variously called "death-with-dignity" or "right-to-die" legislation that makes a "living will" a legally valid document. Under the law, which takes effect 1 January 1977, a person may execute a will that says, in effect, "I do not want to be hooked up to a respirator or kept alive by other artificial means when I am terminally ill and death is imminent" (*Science*, 17 September).

Two persons other than the will writer's relatives must witness his signing to make the document valid. And although there are no provisions in the law for penalizing physicians who ignore a patient's living will, it does say that failure to follow the patient's expressed wishes will constitute "unprofessional conduct." The law does protect physicians who terminate life-support in accordance with the will and also states that insurance companies cannot treat such a death as a suicide and, therefore, withhold death benefits.

The bill followed a stormy course in the legislature, where it was opposed by groups claiming that it marked the first step on the deadly road to euthanasia, but in the end it survived and was signed into law by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., late one evening, just before the 30-day period he had to consider it in was about to expire. In a statement made after the signing, Brown, a former Roman Catholic seminarian, said, "There's a very ancient moral doctrine that there's no moral obligation to sustain life through artificial and extraordinary means." Indeed, this is the position of the Catholic Church, although it opposes euthanasia. "Machines should serve humans rather than the reverse," Brown declared after reportedly struggling over whether to sign the bill.

The California law as presently written would contribute nothing to the resolution of a case such as that involving Karen

Ann Quinlan because it requires that the living will be signed while an individual is mentally competent.

Last year, 16 states, in addition to California, considered "death-with-dignity" legislation (*Science*, 26 December 1975). Sidney Rossoff, president of the Society for the Right to Die, a 40-year-old lobbying group in New York City, thinks the California bill has set a precedent other states will follow. "There's no doubt about it that the passage of the California law will show legislators in other states that they should not fear the subject, that the public is ready for it," he says. Maybe so.—B.J.C.

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### Charges Dropped in Haemmerli Case in Switzerland

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A year ago, the question of letting the dying die stirred great controversy in Europe in the case of Urs Peter Haemmerli, a Zurich physician who was accused of murder for discontinuing life-sustaining measures in the terminally ill (*Science*, 26 December 1975). In effect, Haemmerli was charged with practicing what he refers to as "passive euthanasia" because he refused to force-feed patients to postpone imminent death.

Recently, a Swiss court cleared Haemmerli of the charges brought against him by a local councilwoman and city health official—charges Haemmerli alleges were politically motivated. In what is thought to be a precedent setting case, the court said, "One cannot accuse a doctor of manslaughter if he decides to withhold nourishment from a patient whose human personality has been lost due to severe brain damage."

Haemmerli, for his part, is now suing the government for \$40,000 for losses in income and costs incurred in his defense in a case he thinks the state should never have brought. It was, he says, a "stupid accusation."—B.J.C.