

The burden of responding to this questioning of motives fell on NBS director Ernest Ambler.

Representative George E. Brown, Jr. (D-Calif.), was the most persistent in pursuit of the identities and motives of the policy-makers. With the Office of Management and Budget obviously in mind, he told Ambler, "I get the distinct impression that budgetary decisions and most of the planning decisions are being made elsewhere." Ambler, who like other agency witnesses, made it clear that he was there to defend the Administration budget, did concede that, "Mr. Brown, any director of a bureau will tell that he gets a lot of help."

A point Brown seemed to be getting at was expressed this way in earlier testi-

mony by Dresselhaus. "It is difficult to understand the devastating budget cuts in basic research of the NBS funding for 1984 in view of the general policy of the 1984 budget, which shows a large increase of 18 percent in basic research across the various agencies."

A witness at the House hearings, Robert H. Pry put it another way. Pry, vice chairman for technology of Gould, Inc., said "I find it puzzling that the one department marked for the largest percentage decrease in R & D is the Department of Commerce, whose record for providing technical results useful to industry, per dollar spent, is unsurpassed by any other government department or agency."

Congress is not above reproach in its

dealings with NBS. For example, it recently began imposing "floors" on spending for activities it deemed important. In a period of static or shrinking funding, such rigidity can be damaging to a scientific agency. And the congressional process is a rough and ready one in which it is easier to deplore and restore budget cuts than to look carefully at an agency like NBS and inquire if it is doing what it should be doing and doing it well or poorly. But now in the case of NBS the legislators seem to have caught the Administration in a contradiction between the policies it professes and actually practices. At any rate, if the Administration has a persuasive counterargument, it was not made at the hearings.

—JOHN WALSH

## Research Chief Quits French Cabinet

*Paris.* France's flamboyant minister of research and technology, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, has resigned following a major political disagreement with President François Mitterrand and the majority of the French Cabinet over the steps that should be taken to boost France's technological industries and solve its economic and social problems.

Chevènement's resignation was announced last week as part of the broader reshuffle of cabinet positions that followed the devaluation of the French franc and the revaluation of the German mark. He will be succeeded by Laurent Sabius, a 36-year-old protégé of Mitterrand who was previously minister of the budget and is expected to follow a more conventional path than his predecessor. Significantly, the order of Sabius' responsibilities have been reversed in this title, so that he will now be minister for industry and research.

The timing of Chevènement's departure, the most notable change in the Cabinet lineup, was partly coincidental. Chevènement had, in fact, handed his resignation to President Mitterrand on 2 February, after a meeting of the Council of Ministers at which he had been reprimanded by the President for wanting to play an excessively large role in determining the strategies of France's newly nationalized industries.

Chevènement had argued that strong intervention was the only way of making the government's economic and technology policies consistent with its socialist principles. Mitterrand, however, preferred to listen to other Cabinet members who argued that the industries should be left more free to pursue their own strategies.

The clash had been brewing for some time. Chevènement, a charismatic politician who generates strong emotions in both his supporters and detractors, is the leader of a powerful left-wing group within the French Socialist party which had long expressed its opposition to the increasingly monetarist policies that the government is adopting under the guidance of its finance minister (and new deputy prime minister) Jacques Delors.

As research minister, Chevènement achieved some notable successes. He persuaded the government to endorse in principle an expansion of the research and development budget from 1.8 to 2.5 percent of the gross national product by 1985. He also organized a vast national colloquium on research policy at the beginning of last year which helped reduce the skepticism of the scientific community toward his plans. The previously low morale of scientists was raised further when the promised increases in research spending began to materialize last year with a research budget almost 10 percent higher in real terms than in 1981.

In July 1982, Chevènement was promoted by Mitterrand, who added responsibility for industry to his portfolio. It was a challenge to which Chevènement responded eagerly, arguing that France could become the world's third technological power behind the United States and Japan.

In the end, however, he was unable to reach his goals. He faced combined resistance to his proposals for strong government intervention both from the industries for which he was now responsible—ranging from chemicals to telecommunications—and from Cabinet colleagues who argued that it was necessary to place economic pragmatism before ideology.

There was also growing disenchantment with Chevènement's strategy within the scientific community. Many French scientists are concerned that general budgetary constraints will mean that support for research this year will fall well behind the promised targets and that Chevènement's expanded responsibilities would have left him little time to attend to their more parochial concerns, such as the revision of career structures within research institutions.

Chevènement's successor, Sabius, lacks Chevènement's political commitments and charisma but has built a reputation as an effective and intelligent administrator, as well as a successful political tactician. He is expected to proceed more cautiously, giving greater responsibilities and freedom to the private sector but endorsing his predecessor's support for increased funds for basic science.

—DAVID DICKSON