

computer communication. This strategy has explicitly been adopted to strengthen their ability to compete with IBM in the European telecommunications market (governments are being urged to adopt the same standards for their computer purchases), and is being eagerly supported by the Commission of the European Economic Community in Brussels.

Where networks are established linking public institutions such as universities, argues the commission, these should make use of a seven-layered set of design standards known as the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI), currently being developed by the International Standards Organization.

IBM has agreed, in principle, to move toward these common standards as part of a broad agreement reached with the EEC commission last month to head off antitrust action against the company. However, at present IBM has its own communications system that works on proprietary protocols, and many European manufacturers fear that if these become widely used by IBM customers, which often include governments, it could make the task of competing with IBM more difficult.

These two issues have led to some hard bargaining between IBM, EARN's Board of Directors, and the Administrative Conference of European Posts and Telecommunications (CEPT), an advisory body that seeks to coordinate the activities of the various national postal and telecommunications authorities in Europe.

A meeting held at the end of June between the EARN board and the CEPT hammered out a compromise, under which the advisory body agreed to recommend to each individual authority that the network should be allowed to start operation. As a result, various lines connecting the "gateways" are currently being installed to order.

In return, several concessions were made by the computer users. One was their acceptance that, as well as charging rent for the leased lines, the postal and telecommunications authorities would have the right to demand a volume charge on top, covering the data flow along the lines. In practice, says Jennings, it is expected that most authorities will set their charge rate at zero. Budd of IBM warns that excessive charging could jeopardize the whole project; "we want to invest in a network that European academics can run and fund themselves," he says, adding that the company is "not prepared to contribute an astronomical sum" to make EARN a success.

A second compromise has been reached over the potential conflict between IBM's communications protocols, which EARN will initially be based on, and the desire of European governments and manufacturers to implement the OSI standards currently under development. Picking his words carefully, Jennings says that "I would hope that we would eventually adopt the detailed standards that are coming out of the European standardization work." A special subcommittee to map out a plan for moving toward an open system was established by EARN's overseeing board when it met in Rome earlier this month.

How these commitments on both sides work out in practice remains to be seen. Already several governments have indicated that they will be prepared to let EARN go ahead. Britain's Department of Trade and Industry, for example, is expected to issue a license in the near future for the EARN linkage between the British "gateway" computer at the Science and Engineering Research Council's Rutherford Laboratories and CERN, which in turn will be linked to Rome. In Germany, EARN is also likely to get the green light—but on condition that it slowly evolves into a national OSI-based system currently under development, the Deutsches Forschung Net.

Other countries may be more problematic. France, in particular, is currently exploring several possible configurations for public research networks—including the use of its recently launched but underutilized satellite Telecom 1—and has long been hostile to private developments in the field of telecommunications. However, as one senior computer scientist admits, "there are many research workers in this country who would like to see EARN go ahead."

IBM argues that, having offered to make the technology available, it is now up to the academics to keep pressure on national telecommunications authorities to grant the operating licenses. "I think it is a users' problem, they have to work it out with those authorities," says Budd.

Jennings agrees: "My primary concern at the moment is to get the network up and operational," he says. Both claim that speed is a top priority, and that the lack of such a network at present places European academics at a disadvantage compared to their American colleagues. "EARN must be a success today, not tomorrow, if we want to eliminate the gap between American and European academic research," says Jennings.

—DAVID DICKSON

Chinese Express Views on Mosher to Stanford

Stanford University president Donald Kennedy recently got more than he asked for when the Chinese government responded to his request for information concerning Steven M. Mosher. A letter from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences hints that if Stanford does not "properly handle" the Mosher affair, cultural and academic exchanges between the United States and China would be damaged.

Mosher was expelled last year from the university's anthropology department for allegedly engaging in "seriously unethical conduct" while conducting field research in southern China. Mosher argues that he was ousted for political reasons. His appeal to Stanford concerning the dismissal is now in its final phase.

In May, Kennedy wrote to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, asking more questions about Mosher's activities while he conducted field research in China in 1979 and 1980. The Chinese replied in June. Mosher recently released the 1-1/2 page letter and has called attention to a passage that he characterizes as "a veiled threat." In the letter's last paragraph, academy official Wang Ping says, "During and after his stay in China, Mosher's behavior seriously damaged the cultural and scholastic exchange between China and the United States. . . . For the future normal and beneficial exchange between our two countries, I trust that you will make a correct judgment, based on the facts, and properly handle this matter." Mosher argues that this lends further credence to his argument that he was dismissed from Stanford under pressure from the Chinese at a time when the country had just opened its doors to foreign social researchers.

Kennedy said through a university spokesman, "We didn't ask [the Chinese] for help in deciding the case. All we asked them for was information. We got part of that and we propose to decide the case ourselves."

It is unclear what information the Chinese provided because, in the letter, the Academy apparently declined to answer questions posed by Kennedy. "Regarding the several questions

you raised in your letter, we cannot see the importance of them relating to the unlawful behavior of Mr. Mosher in China," the letter said.

The Chinese academy also asked what everyone else interested in the case has been seeking—a copy of the anthropology department's report that describes the exact reasons for Mosher's expulsion. Both Stanford and Mosher have refused to release the report. Kennedy has not set a date when he will decide the Mosher case.—**MARJORIE SUN**

Pasteur Institute Gets New Commercial Outlet

Paris. Two of the leading names in the French biotechnology industry — Institute Mérieux and Institut Pasteur Production (IPP)—have joined ranks to form a new company which will become one of the largest producers of serum and vaccines in the world, second only in size to the American company Merck.

IPP was set up in 1972 to develop the commercial applications of research carried out at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, and was previously jointly owned by the research institute and the nationalized drug company Sanofi, itself a subsidiary of Elf-Acquitaine. Despite some early commercial successes, the company has recently been experiencing economic difficulties.

The Institut Mérieux was initially set up in Lyon by a colleague of Louis Pasteur, Marcel Mérieux. In 1968 it was taken over by Rhône-Poulenc, whose injection of capital helped the company to become one of the world's largest producers of vaccines, with particularly strong markets in the Third World.

The merger between the two has long been sought by the French government, and even longer by the Institut Mérieux, which has bought the 51 percent of IPP's capital previously owned by Sanofi. It became possible largely through the recent nationalization of Rhône-Poulenc, and will give Mérieux indirect access to the results of the fundamental research program at the Institut Pasteur, in particular those with potential applications of genetic

engineering to vaccine production.

In return, Rhône-Poulenc will make a contribution to the research budget of the Pasteur Institut, taking over the financial commitment previously made by IPP.

One of the first commercial targets of the new joint company is expected to be the development of an anti-malarial vaccine. The agreement between the two companies covers only IPP's activities in serum and vaccine production. The rest of its commercial activities, including in particular the development and sale of diagnostic products, will be operated by a separate company known as Pasteur Diagnostic.—**DAVID DICKSON**

Congress Relents, Boosts USDA Competitive Grants

A House-Senate conference committee hammered out a compromise appropriation for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) that gives a real boost to its research programs. In particular, the conferees agreed to increase to \$46 million the department's competitive grants program and to allot \$20 million for its biotechnology initiative. The conference report now awaits approval by the full Congress.

Both those research programs had been whittled down considerably in the House by Representative Jamie Whitten (D-Miss.), who chairs key appropriations committees. The Administration had recommended that the competitive grants program at USDA be set at \$50 million and that the biotechnology initiative receive \$28.5 million in fiscal year 1985. The House cut these figures back to \$32.5 million and \$10 million, respectively, and added earmarked projects that would have cut the department's freedom to direct research still further. The Senate, however, went along with the Administration's recommendations (*Science*, 31 August, p. 911).

The big surprise is that Whitten, who has often been accused of intransigence when it comes to reforming agricultural research, agreed to a nearly \$14-million increase for competitive grants. Observers say he has been gradually persuaded that these reforms were inevitable, but the pro-

grams might have been removed from USDA if a compromise could not be made. The reform is by no means complete, however, as the conferees did leave several earmarked programs intact, including projects dedicated to studying soybeans, acid precipitation, and alcohol fuels.

—**JEFFREY L. FOX**

Alzheimer's Disease: Plans but No New Funds

A task force convened by Margaret Heckler, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), has released a report on Alzheimer's disease. Though the report plots a general strategy for studying this debilitating disease, it stops short of recommending any funding initiatives, concluding, instead, that existing funds are adequate for implementing its recommendations.

The principal federal agencies conducting research on Alzheimer's disease include several institutes of the National Institutes of Health; the National Institute of Mental Health; and the Veterans Administration. The report lays out critical avenues for each of these agencies to pursue by using epidemiology, developing better criteria for diagnosis of the disease, and exploring why it develops. The report also calls for disseminating information about the disease—a practice that already is helping doctors to recognize more readily when patients have it. The task force was headed by Edward N. Brandt, Jr., the assistant secretary for health, and consisted primarily of HHS health agency officials.

Although the report recommends no new research funding, it does recommend correcting a current inequity in federal Medicare payments to doctors treating Alzheimer's patients. This change will eliminate a \$250 cut-off in fees that now occurs when an Alzheimer's patient is classified as suffering from a "mental disease" rather than a neurological syndrome. Researchers have concluded that Alzheimer's disease, which causes a broad array of mental impairments, clearly is caused by physical deterioration in parts of the brain.

—**JEFFREY L. FOX**