

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**