

As part of this initiative, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has written to the heads of 30 large high-technology companies asking them to support the government's goals either directly through financial aid to students and university departments, or indirectly through the donation of equipment and the secondment of staff.

Joseph also announced that the government is to spend \$28 million over the next 2 years boosting technology courses in high schools; a substantial part of this money will be used to retrain schoolteachers currently responsible for other subjects.

The new tax incentives favoring research-based companies were announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson in his budget address and are continued in the revision of the Business Expansion Scheme first launched by the government in 1983.

Under the original terms of the scheme, individuals were entitled to write off against income tax \$45,000 invested in private trading companies based in Britain. The rules have been rewritten to include companies engaged in research and development, which had previously not been considered as engaged in "trading" since their income is derived from research contracts, royalties, and license fees rather than the sale of products.

—DAVID DICKSON

Reagan Endorses NAE's "Decade III" Program

A new program of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) has been endorsed by President Reagan as a step toward achieving what the President calls the "Second American Revolution" based on progress in technology and engineering. The NAE has recently announced a plan to help "advance the industrial competitiveness of this nation" through an initiative called "Decade III." With funding from corporations, foundations, and other private sources, Decade III will include what the academy calls "detailed studies" of the competitive status of U.S. industries, the economic potential of emerging technologies, and ways of strengthening engineering education.

In a letter to NAE president Robert M. White and chairman Stephen D. Bechtel Jr., Reagan asked the academy "to marshal the nation's technical engineering-based expertise in a campaign that will ensure America's scientific, technological and engineering leadership into the 21st century."

Decade III will include a series of symposia on technology and society, as well as round tables on the management of technological innovation, ways of protecting the environment while promoting economic development, and similar topics. Says White, who has declared a strong interest in increasing the engineering academy's visibility, "... we are pleased that President Reagan has given the NAE's initiatives his personal expression of support."

—BARBARA J. CULLITON

Europe to Start Removing Lead from Gas in 1989

The ten member-countries of the European Economic Community have, for the first time, agreed on a series of steps to eliminate lead from gasoline—but on a considerably longer time scale than that recently announced for the United States by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Meeting in Brussels last week, the environment ministers of the ten countries adopted a resolution requiring each country to introduce lead-free gasoline (currently unavailable in Europe) by 1989. They also agreed that individual countries should reduce the maximum lead content of gasoline from 0.4 gram per liter to 0.15 gram per liter (the current minimum) "as soon as they see fit."

The general understanding is that all new cars produced by European manufacturers from 1989 onward will run on lead-free gasoline, but no date has been fixed for the complete elimination of lead.

The decision represents an attempt to balance conflicting pressures not only from different interest groups but also from the different countries involved. The German government, for example, had long been pushing for the elimination of lead from gasoline. Britain has argued for a ban but on a much extended time scale. France

and Italy reluctantly agreed to go along with their European partners but they continue to point to the heavy costs that they claim are likely to be imposed on their respective automobile industries, already suffering from stiff competition from Japan and other countries.

Both countries voiced the same reservations about an even more controversial package, also agreed to at last week's meeting in Brussels, under which all new European automobiles will eventually be required to be equipped with catalytic converters. These will be needed to meet strict emission limits broadly comparable to those that have existed in the United States for several years. Again, Germany wanted swift action, Britain preferred a longer timetable, and France and Italy resisted the move.

The final decision will require large cars, which are important in the German market, to meet the limits in 1989, while smaller cars, which the French and Italians mostly manufacture, will have to meet them in 1993.

—DAVID DICKSON

Charges Against Refusenik Lifted

Last year the KGB blocked an exit visa for Soviet microbiologist David Goldfarb on the grounds that the bacterial strains he wished to take with him were "national security material." The latest word is that the charges have been dropped for "lack of substance" and the material restored to Goldfarb, according to his son, Alex, a professor at Columbia University.

Now, however, the KGB has threatened Goldfarb with prosecution for "anti-Soviet propaganda" because he has expressed support for the moratorium, initiated by American and English scientists, on sending strains to Soviet scientists pending resolution of the case.

Alex Goldfarb says officials at the Soviet Academy of Sciences have expressed concern over the boycott, which is apparently being complied with by quite a few scientists here and abroad. "Obviously this thing has been working," says Goldfarb. But the matter of the visa is still up in the air.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN