

members of the two political parties that make up France's ruling conservative coalition for steps to counterbalance the effects of changes introduced 2 years ago by Devaquet's predecessor, Alain Savary.

A major thrust of the new proposals, for example, is to restore to senior university academics much of the power on administrative and academic committees that had been taken away from them by the socialist government and distributed more widely among junior faculty members and labor unions representing technical and administrative staff.

Other important moves have been the decision to grant greater financial independence to individual academic units within a university, and to allow universities a limited degree of discretion both in the selection of students (currently they are required to accept all students with the appropriate entry qualifications), as well as to set teaching fees (now decided by the government).

The Senate passed the bill by a substantial majority. It is now due to be debated in the lower of France's two legislative bodies, the National Assembly, and is expected to pass into law before the end of the year. ■

DAVID DICKSON

## Division, Confusion Found on Campus

Examinations of American undergraduate education typically concentrate on the college curriculum or on the purposes of a liberal education. A new report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has a wider focus. "College: The Undergraduate Experience in America," as the title suggests, explores the broad institutional and social setting in which undergraduate education takes place.

While the report finds considerable strength and vitality in the enterprise, it characterizes the undergraduate college as a "troubled institution." And in what serves as a summary of the report's analysis, Ernest L. Boyer, president of the foundation and author of the report, writes that "The college suffers from conflicting priorities and competing special interests. During our study we found deep divisions that dramatically diminish the intellectual and social life on campus and restrict the capacity of the college effectively to serve its students."

In dealing with factors outside the classroom, the study reflects the reality that undergraduate education is, among other things, a business and one that declining demographics and rising costs have made

increasingly competitive. A sober economic note is that for the past 5 years tuition at private colleges has been going up at roughly double the rate of family incomes. One development that the study views with some alarm is the use of sophisticated marketing techniques in student recruiting. A strict code of conduct for college recruitment should be drawn up based on work already done by registrars and admissions officers, the study concludes.

The core of the study deals with the relationships of students, faculty, and administrators, relationships found to be increasingly vexed by a confusion over goals. Students are seen as poorly prepared academically and animated by a narrow careerist concerns that shape their attitude toward learning.

Faculty are described as correspondingly poorly prepared to teach undergraduates and conditioned by their own training to place a higher value on scholarship than on teaching, a tendency reinforced by an academic reward system that links career advancement and professional reputation to accomplishment in research.

Lamenting a "great separation" between academic and social life at many institutions, the study notes that the scrapping of the *in loco parentis* principle has led to a dormitory life very different from that prevailing a generation ago. The study does not dwell on blaring stereotypes, sex, or drugs, but does comment, "We are especially impressed that many faculty and academic administrators distance themselves from student life and appear to be confused about their obligations in nonacademic matters. How can life outside the classroom support the educational mission of the college? How should tensions between student freedom and institutional authority be resolved. And how can the college leave space for privacy while also providing activities that sustain community and encourage service?"

"College: The Undergraduate Experience" draws on national surveys of students, parents, faculty, and administrators commissioned for the 3-year study, but the main basis seems to be the information and insights gathered by a corps of "observer-reporters" recruited by the foundation, who spent several weeks at each of 29 varied institutions.

The study does put forward a series of recommendations, more than 80 in all. These amount less to a comprehensive recipe for reform than urgings to confront the shortcomings in college life today identified in the report. The aim of the study seems to be equally to fuel the discussion of undergraduate education and to expand the discussion agenda. ■ JOHN WALSH

## Briefing:

### California Ballot

California voters rejected two ballot initiatives that could have resulted in major salary cuts for university faculty and the possible quarantining of AIDS victims. Proposition 61 gave voters a chance to cap compensation for all state employees except the governor at \$64,000; many University of California professors make more and, now, can rest assured that they will continue to do so. Proposition 64 was a controversial measure aimed at controlling AIDS by legally (and incorrectly) defining it as an "easily communicable disease." Health officials, who called the proposition a potential public health disaster, could have been forced to quarantine AIDS patients and carriers. ■

B.J.C.

### NASA Looks to Ariane

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is planning to use the European rocket Ariane to launch some of the scientific missions that were to have been flown by the space shuttle. NASA administrator James Fletcher said in London last week that Ariane, developed under the guidance of France's National Center for Space Studies on behalf of the European Space Agency, was being included with Delta and Atlas-Centaur rockets, as well as the shuttle itself, in plans for launching future scientific payloads. "We have to look at Ariane and our own launch vehicles and see the appropriate mix between the three," Fletcher said. ■ D.D.

### Soviet Nuclear Plans

The recent accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant has done little to alter the Soviet Union's commitment to the rapid expansion of nuclear power. Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai I. Ryzhkov said last week that the U.S.S.R. and its Eastern Bloc allies intended to increase the production of electricity by nuclear power between five and six times before the year 2000. Ryzhkov was addressing the annual meeting of the heads of government of the ten member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). According to the Soviet press agency TASS, an agreement was signed during the meeting under which the Soviet allies agreed to increase from 15 to 31 the number of nuclear power plants in their various countries. ■ D.D.