

Briefings

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Soviets Back in World Psychiatric Body

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) during its mid-October meeting in Athens voted overwhelmingly to readmit the official Soviet psychiatric group, which resigned in 1983 in the midst of accusations over alleged abuses of psychiatry.

Both the American Psychiatric Association and the British Royal Society, which have been in the forefront of critics of Soviet psychiatric practices, did a turnabout and joined the majority. The vote was 291 to 45, with 19 abstentions.

The readmission is conditional, subject to suspension if the Soviets fail to halt entirely the use of psychiatry to control dissidents. A delegation from the world association is to visit the U.S.S.R. next year to check on the situation.

Soviet expert Peter Reddaway of George Washington University told *Science* that the official WPA leadership and a large phalanx of Soviets representing the All-Union Society of Psychiatrists and Narcologists were said to be lobbying furiously at the meeting to get a favorable vote. At the last minute, the Soviets reportedly openly admitted that there had been abuses—a move that many critics held to be a *sine qua non* for Soviet readmission. "That may have been a clincher," says Reddaway.

Ford Launches Kids' Math Project

The Ford Foundation has announced a \$10-million, 5-year project, its largest ever public education venture, for teaching math to middle school (grades 4 to 8) children in disadvantaged communities.

Cumbersomely entitled "Quantitative understanding:

Amplifying student achievement and reasoning" (QUASAR), the program will be run by the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center under the direction of Edward A. Silver.

QUASAR will be conducted in 15 schools in urban and rural areas around the country. None has been selected yet. The center will pick five schools this winter and begin training teachers and administrators. The program will start in classrooms next year, and ten more schools will be selected the following year.

The program, which will endeavor to integrate the teaching of basics with creative approaches to problem-solving, will draw heavily on the recommended guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (*Science*, 31 March, p. 1655), whose president-elect, Iris Carl, chairs QUASAR's technical advisory panel.

NSF to Terminate Princeton Center

The roller coaster ride of Princeton's John von Neumann National Supercomputer Center has come to an end. The National Science Foundation has decided to phase out funding as of October 1990.

There has been speculation about the center's fate ever since the demise of ETA Systems, Inc., last spring, which has turned the center's ETA-10 supercomputer into a white elephant.

The Princeton center, one of five established by NSF in 1984, is the only one with an ETA-10 supercomputer. Owned and operated by a 13-university consortium, it supports more than 1400 researchers around the country and an in-house staff of 65. Its NSF budget this year is \$12 million.

Survival seemed possible after an NSF panel recommended the center be kept, provided that it installed an eight-processor Cray computer and got more money

from the consortium. Center director Doyle Knight says the consortium agreed to the conditions and that several other sources had committed \$18 million for the next 5 years.

But NSF doesn't think the country needs the Princeton center any more because other centers have Cray computers, and dozens of non-NSF supercomputing facilities have been springing up that can meet the needs of von Neumann users.

Knight says he was "surprised and very disappointed" at the decision. But he is determined to keep the center going. He has asked NSF to reconsider and is still trying to raise more money.

Private Sector to Do British Sex Survey

In a triumph of Thatcherism, British private enterprise has filled a void in medical research created by the Prime Minister herself. The Wellcome Trust, Britain's largest medical research charity, has agreed to fund a national survey on sexual attitudes and life-styles to the tune of £900,000 (about \$1.45 million).

Thatcher is believed to have vetoed the survey, which had the support of government advisers, as likely to be inaccurate, offensive, and an invasion of privacy. Some commentators believe she privately approved of it but thought funding it might "taint" her government.

Epidemiologist Roy Anderson of London's Imperial College, a member of the survey's

steering committee, says the survey, refined on the basis of two recent pilot studies, "will be better than anything that has been done before."


The survey will be of a random sample of 20,000 people, aged 16 to 59. Interviewers will ask participants directly about their opinions on morals and sexual mores. Intimate matters will be explored in detail via confidential written questionnaires. The survey is also designed to find out what 20-year-olds were doing in the 50s, and how attitudes to contraception have changed.

The Wellcome Trust owns 75% of the company of the same name that manufactures AZT. Trust director Peter Williams says, "we are completely independent of the company. . . . The company didn't know we were doing this."

Baltimore Says "I Do"

David Baltimore, as expected, has accepted the presidency of Rockefeller University, effective next July. Baltimore told a faculty gathering that his first goal would be "healing of the wounds." Although he was unanimously approved by Rockefeller's board of trustees, a number of senior faculty opposed the appointment because of his involvement in a research study now the subject of a federal investigation.

MIT's Whitehead Institute doesn't know who will replace Baltimore as director. A search committee was announced on 20 October.



Office of Research Reporting, NICHD

New Surgeon General. News hit the papers on 18 October that Antonia Novello, a pediatrician and deputy director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, is President Bush's choice to succeed C. Everett Koop as Surgeon General. A White House spokesman would not confirm the selection, saying only that Novello is a "leading candidate" and that background checks are still in progress. News reports say Novello passes one important test—her views on abortion are consistent with those of the Administration.