

"We are setting out to do nothing less than turn around the \$300 billion a year medical/health establishment in the United States," he told a press conference in Washington.

The People's Medical Society, as it is called, is located at the Rodale Press headquarters in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. It intends to take a grass-roots approach, acting as a clearinghouse for information on other health organizations; advising members (12,000 so far) on state and national legislation; rooting out cases of medical incompetence, and promoting principles of disease prevention among both medical personnel and consumers.

Its first major project is to abet the development of local medical libraries for laypeople. According to the magazine *Nutrition Action*, this will not be another "doctor-bashing group."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

## ESA Wants to Help Build a Space Station

If and when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) builds its space station, the European Space Agency (ESA) would like to be a partner—if the Reagan Administration will only let it.

ESA has recently been looking at how Europe might use an American station, as well as at the ways European industry might participate in building it. Jacques Collet, who heads the ESA study group, recently explained to *Science* how these studies fit into ESA's broader plans.

"Spacelab and Ariane are coming to the end of their development phases," he says, "so the question is, Where do we go from here? It's clear that [communications satellites in] geosynchronous orbit will continue to be predominant for the next 10 years. But it's possible that space-based materials processing could take off, too. If so, we need to develop the systems to cope with a very significant new market. And we need the means to do it on our own."

Thus, he says, ESA is looking at new launch vehicles after Ariane, perhaps with the capability of bringing things back to Earth. It is also looking at "In-Orbit Infrastructure"—tech-

niques for automated rendezvous and docking between unmanned payloads, for example, or automated assembly and servicing of payloads in geosynchronous orbit. And, of course, ESA is looking into cooperating with NASA on a manned space station.

The space station studies were accelerated last year to fit in with NASA's own study schedule. NASA says it likes the idea of international participation, says Collet. In fact the agency's original idea was for European, Japanese, and Canadian aerospace firms to work closely with American industry on mission definition studies.

That hope foundered last fall, however, when the U.S. State Department refused to grant the export agreements that would enable American firms working on the space station studies to exchange technology with the foreign firms.

ESA went ahead anyway with its own studies. But the irony of having the State Department take a hard-line stance on technology transfer to its own allies was lost on no one. In March, for example, the ESA team was not allowed to attend a major NASA conference on space station technology needs.

As Collet puts it diplomatically, "The United States is going to have to solve this technology transfer problem if it hopes to go to a cooperative endeavor on the space station."

—M. MITCHELL WALDROP

## San Diego Picks Sodium Over the Stars

Astronomers lost a skirmish in their long battle against light pollution last week when the city council of San Diego, 60 miles south of the famous 5-meter (200-inch) telescope on Mount Palomar, voted to replace 17,000 aging mercury-vapor street-lamps with new, high-pressure sodium lamps—the kind with the warm, amber-pink glow that is disastrous for astronomical research. Also affected is San Diego State University's Mount Laguna Observatory.

"Spectroscopically, mercury is a line source and we can live with it," says Robert Brucato, assistant director of Palomar. "We just work be-

tween the lines. But high-pressure sodium is a continuum so broad you can't get around it."

If the decision stands, he adds, and if the surrounding communities follow San Diego's lead, then the growth rate in San Diego county is such that Palomar could be blinded within 10 years.

The irony is that Brucato and the many other scientists who testified before the council could point to a better way: low-pressure sodium lamps. Not only do the low-pressure lights emit virtually all their radiance in the yellow sodium doublet lines, which makes the astronomers happy, but they are both cheaper and brighter than the high-pressure variety. Indeed, in the past there has been a felicitous union of interests. Sites such as Tucson and Phoenix (near Kitt Peak National Observatory) and San Jose (near Lick Observatory) have willingly cooperated with their scientific neighbors by installing low-pressure sodium lights.

San Diego would now be getting ready to join them—in fact, the city council has voted to do so three times since last November—except for one hitch. The deep-yellow lights, alas, make things look funny. "Bug lights," snorted Councilman William Mitchell, who made it his cause to oppose them.

On 21 June, with his task made easier by massive turnover in the 9-member council, adverse reaction to a test program in his own district ("100 percent negative"), and some adroit parliamentary maneuvers of his own, Mitchell succeeded in getting a 4–3 vote against the low-pressure lights and for the high-pressure sodium lights.

However, Michael Gotch, the council's strongest supporter of low-pressure lights, is not ready to give up. "Mitchell's presentation [of the adverse public reaction] was orchestrated," he says. "I've had these lights in my district for years, and people are very satisfied."

Gotch hopes for a compromise, perhaps a buffer zone around Palomar. It is not a trivial matter for the city. "San Diego is being watched by a number of high-tech companies," he says. "They are waiting to see what kind of support we give to the academic and technical communities before they move here."

—M. MITCHELL WALDROP