

opinion can make itself felt within the government.

The most immediate problem of the fledgling Nigerian research councils is political rather than scientific. Eastern Nigeria, which includes much of the country's leading scientific talent, has recalled its citizens from other regions and virtually cut off communication with the rest of the country.

The East's military governor, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, has declared that it will not recognize acts of the Federal Military Government unless they conform to the East's desires. Given this state of virtual insurrection, it is doubtful that Eastern scientists would accept appointment to the councils, or attend any of their meetings outside the East.

The Science Association of Nigeria, a nongovernmental group, has in the past provided the government with some contact with the scientific community. Its president, Dr. Eni Njoku, vice chancellor of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, in the East, is an internationally renowned scientist.

Recently, however, he was prevented from attending a meeting of the association held in the West. Unless the association can meet somewhere outside of Nigeria, its incipient role as a unifying force is likely to be denied it.

FROM GENEVA

## Comparative Oncology

The World Health Organization has launched a new international drive in comparative oncology, to find clues in animals to human cancer.

Dr. Martin Kaplan, WHO veterinary unit chief, says the move links the Organization's animal health program and intensified work in comparative medicine.

The UN professional agency has established an international reference center for animal cancers at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington.

To date, at least six other institutions have agreed to work with the new center:

Department of Experimental Veterinary Medicine, University of Glasgow, for leukosis; the University of Zurich's Veterinary Pathology Institute, for lung tumors; the University of Bern's Ambulatory Veterinary Clinic, for tumors of the nervous system; the Netherlands Cancer Institute, Amsterdam, for tumors of the mammary glands and reproductive tract; The Royal Veterinary College's Pathology Department, London, for leukosis and tumors of the alimentary tract and liver; and the Munich University Institute for Animal Pathology, for skin tumors.

These and other centers will collect

tumors of the six most common domestic animals—the horse, ox, sheep, pig, dog-and-cat and of nonhuman primates.

"Then, says Dr. Kaplan, "we'll all work out a system of classification and nomenclature, conforming as closely as possible with the system WHO sponsors for human tumors."

The centers will also gather epidemiological data on the occurrence of various tumors in domestic animals and take part in advanced research.

WHO doctors expect to gain knowledge that will ultimately contribute to control of cancer in man. But "a more immediate result should be the discovery of promising opportunities for etiological studies and of suitable animal models for therapeutic trials in man," says Dr. Kaplan. "Neoplasms are common biological phenomena."

The worldwide waves of influenza are now believed to be linked to animal infections and some beasts' strange ability to harbor dormant viruses. Dr. Kaplan has implicated Chinese pigs and Asian flu, for example.

WHO is sponsoring an international symposium on comparative leukemia research in Paris, July 11-13.

—David Alan Ehrlich

## Standard Marijuana

While its defenders insist marijuana is harmless, United Nations doctors fight for more control over the traffic in "pot," "tea," "hashish," or "kif," as it may be called.

One first step is to learn just what it is. Experiments on its effects around the world are not comparable because there is no standard "pot." Its active principles vary widely.

Made from the female cannabis plant that grows wild as well as under cultivation in many parts of the globe, marijuana is, according to the U.N. Narcotics Commission in Geneva, the most widely abused natural hallucinogen.

The Commission is attempting to develop an international standard against which all marijuana can be measured for potency.

Samples have been collected from around the world and mixed. Now the result is under study by thin layer chromatography and ultraviolet and infrared spectroscopy at the Commission's laboratory to work out a standard reference sample.

This will allow experimenters everywhere to collate their findings with those of their colleagues in different countries. Both human and animal experimentation is now going forward, with particular interest reported from Greece.

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