

next large step — in the language of old-time TV quiz programs it could be called the next plateau — in the unification of physics, the unified field theories, the grand unification theories that are expected to lace up all of physics.

CERN proposes to have LEP constructed and running by 1987. And the momentum rolls on with only one possible hitch: a court case brought in France. The plans are for LEP's tunnels, which house the rings in which electrons and positrons will circulate, to extend into the Jura Mountains on the French side of the border. CERN plans to build a test gallery into the Jura in early 1982. According to a report in the July 2 NATURE a court in Lyons has handed down an injunction against the boring on the motion of an environmentalist group, the *Association pour la Protection de la Nature Gessienne* (the last word refers to the Pays de Gex, the name of the small region involved). The decision turned on whether the proposed boring was temporary, which is permitted under the law protecting the environment in this part of the Jura, or permanent, which is not allowed. CERN considers the gallery temporary, but if the boring should show that this layout is feasible, the gallery would become a part of the final installation. The court chose to regard it as permanent.

CERN has not yet been officially informed of the decision. As an international organization CERN will get the notice from the French foreign ministry when the case has worked its way through appeals. CERN's French partisans hope to have the injunction annulled by a higher court, or failing that, to persuade the French parliament to change the law.

The CERN Council, which represents the 12 nations that own the laboratory, recently voted a preliminary approval of the LEP project by eight to four. A final vote is being delayed a few months while a couple of countries hold elections. Unanimity would be desirable for psychological reasons on a project this important, but if the eight-to-four continues to hold that will be sufficient to carry the project. LEP is planned to be built out of CERN's existing budget levels — no new money involved. New assessments would require unanimity, but shifting money within a budget level already agreed to does not. Unlike American governments, the CERN member nations commit themselves to given sums for CERN for several years at a time. This way the laboratory can plan ahead.

Meanwhile, U.S. laboratories are closed much of the time for lack of funds. When they run, they operate below capacity, and that is not for lack of people wanting to do experiments. American physics construction projects proceed at a pace of two steps forward, one-and-a-half back. Years ago one always saw the names of prominent European physicists all over papers coming out of U.S. labs. Today it is the American names on European papers. □

No social drinking for pregnant women

Pregnant women should drink absolutely no alcohol because "alcohol consumption during pregnancy, especially during the early months, can harm the fetus," warned the Surgeon General in an advisory last week to U.S. doctors. More than a decade of research chronicles the teratogenic effects of abusive drinking during pregnancy, but the advisory published in the July FDA DRUG BULLETIN marks the first time in recent years that public administrators have officially advocated abstinence for pregnant women.

The recommendation arose primarily from a November 1980 report prepared

jointly by the departments of Treasury and Health and Human Services on the general health hazards associated with alcohol. Children of some women who averaged only 1 ounce of pure alcohol daily (two standard drinks) during pregnancy showed significantly decreased birth weights, according to one study cited in the report. Even women who reported drinking as little as 1 ounce of alcohol twice weekly experienced "sizeable and significant increases in spontaneous abortions" when compared with non-drinking women, another study showed.

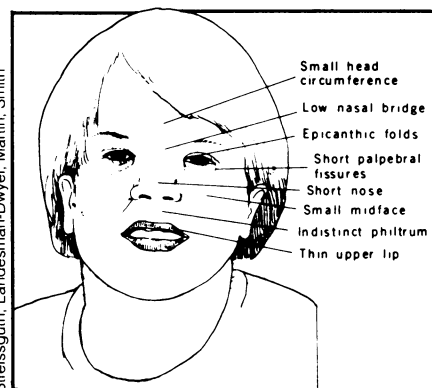
Fetal alcohol syndrome, a condition characterized by specific facial abnormalities, growth deficiencies, central nervous system disorders and mental retardation appears to be triggered predominantly by chronic alcoholism in pregnant women, although heavy smoking, stress, and poor nutrition also contribute to the syndrome's severity (SN: 3/26/77, p. 205). Early efforts by public health officials to curtail drinking in pregnant women focused on mothers of potential FAS victims. The shift in recent years to include light drinkers has been gradual, according to Susan Maloney of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

"The message has become more stringent as the research has indicated that lower and lower levels of alcohol use can affect the fetus," she says. Although some physicians have told her they fear some

pregnant women might unnecessarily panic if told that their low-level alcohol use could harm an unborn child, Maloney discounts the theory. "The pregnant women don't panic," she says. "They generally want the information."

Currently, the campaign to discourage women from drinking when pregnant will stop short of requiring labels on all bottles of alcohol sold, according to Mike Dressler of the Treasury Department, although congressional mandate could change those plans. "If this [the Surgeon General's warning] stirs up Congress, we may have to re-evaluate the campaign," Dressler says. □

(Below) Fetal alcohol syndrome produces abnormal facial features. Gin Row (detail, bottom) an 18th century engraving by William Hogarth.



Sireisguth, Landesman-Dwyer, Martin, Smith

Rosenwald Collection/National Gallery of Art