

pure research with a harder and harder squint.

Pure research in the Soviet Union used to be justified on grounds of national prestige, culture and scholarship. Now its defenders are sounding a practical note. Speaking at a meeting in Miami last winter, Prof. D. I. Blok-hintsev of the Joint Institute of Nuclear Research at Dubna gave an apology for pure science that was based on its benefits to human life rather than to human intellect. And Soviet physicists who have been working toward the design of a planned 1,000-GeV particle accelerator justify themselves in the volume of plans they have written by saying: "The history of the development of physics shows that the discovery of fundamental laws leads, as a rule, to the revolutionary advancement of engineering."

The Soviet Government would like to see it happen. ◇

SOCIAL WORK

Choosing a new way

The nation's welfare programs have been a thorn in the side of city governments for a decade or more. Recently they have become a national issue, and one which the Nixon Administration is girding its loins to handle.

Last week, as Mr. Nixon was trying to pick one of several plans to revamp the nation's welfare system, the issue erupted in a raucous invasion of the 96th annual forum of the National Conference on Social Welfare by a group of insurgents trying to finance their own activist organization.

The Administration is wavering between the idea of a straight Federal minimum for welfare payments (SN: 5/10, p. 448), leaving the structure of the system relatively intact, and the more radical approach of the negative income tax (SN: 11/16, p. 497), called the Family Security Plan by the White House. The FSP would supplement the income of families with low incomes and support those which had no income. Under the plan, a family of four, with no income, would receive \$1,500 to \$1,800 annually.

The Family Security Plan, being pushed by Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert H. Finch and Urban Affairs Council Director Daniel P. Moynihan, would stimulate and reward poor people to get work rather than rely entirely on welfare payments. Under the present system, if a father is employed, his family gets little aid, no matter how marginal his income.

Under the negative tax plan, recipients would be guaranteed a basic annual income. The amount they received would be reduced by half of what they

earned: A family that earned \$2,000 would have its welfare payment reduced by \$1,000. When the family income reached a cut-off point—\$3,000 in the Moynihan plan—the payments would stop.

At the prestigious social welfare conference, headed by former HEW Secretary Arthur S. Flemming, the concern among the 7,000 delegates was with the basic details of social work. Week-long meetings, forums and exhibits dealt with employment opportunities in social work, relations with the black community, work with the mentally retarded, the aged and the drug addict.

But outside the meeting halls, and sometimes inside them, the insurgent members of the National Welfare Rights Organization demonstrated for a revamping of the entire public assistance system. The group's demands are along the lines of the Moynihan approach: a guaranteed minimum income and a national minimum for public assistance.

The radical group, headed by militant civil rights advocate, Dr. George A. Wiley, is demanding that the social workers attending the meeting and the national conference donate \$35,000 as a downpayment on the \$250,000 he says his group needs for operating expenses this year. Dr. Wiley, an organic chemist and former associate national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, claims the NWRO has 30,000 members, most of them Negro women on welfare.

The demonstrators began by trying to disrupt registration in the national conference by demanding one dollar from each delegate as a "poor-people's surcharge."

The reaction of the social workers was a mix of the mild and the indignant. Dr. Flemming, though he had the microphone snatched from him, said he believed the conference should support Dr. Wiley's movement. He rejected the money demand but said the general membership might reconsider. Members of the audience were not so tolerant, and shouts of "blackmail" echoed from the 3,000-member audience in the New York Hilton.

A major complaint of welfare recipients has been what they call unjust distribution of benefits handed out on the basis of investigations into their personal life to determine if they meet the requirements of local ordinances. This is the reason for the demands for national guaranteed minimum income, under which the only criterion for getting aid would be a lack of money coming in. Such a system, which is the basis of the negative tax idea, would eliminate the need for investigations, surprise visits, and all the other investigative operations that fill the social worker's workday.

PROJECT GRANTS

Splitting the costs

Universities here have long contended that for every dollar of Federal research support they receive they spend 15 to 30 cents of their own for overhead, not covered by the research project grants.

Federal efforts to deal with the problem, either by setting a Government-wide standards for overhead or by denying that they are legitimate, grant-linked expenditures, have been going on for a decade. But university officials have never agreed on the fairness of agency-by-agency standards, and even Bureau of the Budget guidelines have failed to bring peace.

Under the mantle of concern with the Government's policy of paying all the direct costs but only part of the indirect costs universities incur for research, Sen. Fred Harris (D-Okla.), chairman of the subcommittee on Government research of the Committee on Government Operations, has been holding hearings aimed at reviewing Federal support of education.

The Harris hearings are not leading to any new legislation, but are aimed at blocking proposals that may come from members of the appropriations committee, including Sen. Karl E. Mundt (R-S.Dak.), who also sits on the research subcommittee. Mundt contends that in paying an additional 25 percent of grant levels in indirect costs, the Government is really subsidizing the administrative activities of some universities (only 100-150 institutions receive substantial support because most small schools are unequipped for major research) and that the others deserve a share of the Federal pie. "How can we grant money to smaller universities," he asks, "instead of concentrating on Harvard and MIT?"

Last year, Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) maneuvered through the Senate a 25 percent ceiling on indirect costs, to which the House did not agree.

One solution to the hassle over direct versus indirect costs and the question of whether or not universities should share the financial burden of research may lie in a Bureau of the Budget proposal to abolish grants and contracts and replace them with research agreements. "The difference between grants and contracts is essentially one of semantics," says Phillip S. Hughes, deputy director of the Bureau of the Budget, who contends their use under varying circumstances is more traditional than logical. Just what a research agreement would be is, at this point, rather undefined but, Hughes comments, "it would be a middle ground," an arrangement that could be

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