

# Business Briefs

## Science

### Biology teaching 'snuffing' interest

The 13-member Committee on High School Biology Education has stated that "nothing short of a massive attack" on the problems of teaching biology and science could change the serious deficiencies in U.S. education, in a report released Sept. 7 by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. The committee believes that biology is simply being mistaught in America's public schools.

The three-year study found that biology is the only science most high school students take. It is also the first science course in the high school curriculum, and therefore should function as the gateway to chemistry and physics. But its teaching seems to be designed to "snuff out interest" in science. Only 30% of high school students go on to study chemistry, and only 15% go on to study physics.

The panel, made up primarily of science educators, stated that preparation of teachers is inadequate, and that the curriculum focuses too much on terminology and too little on concepts.

Among the panel's recommendations are that more science be taught in elementary school, that more science specialists be hired, and that each prospective teacher of high school science be required to do an original research project in college under the direction of a scientist.

## Development

### U.N. reports bleak Third World picture

The U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, concluding its conference in Paris, projects economic deterioration for the world's 41 poorest nations, a situation made markedly worse by recent oil price increases. UNCTAD calculates that these poorest nations, with \$70 billion in debt, would require additional aid of \$11 billion by 1995 to get them started on the path to recovery, but that a \$25 per barrel price

for oil increases that amount to more than \$14 billion.

For these countries to achieve a growth level of 5% per year, they would require \$36 billion in aid annually, or three times the amount they received last year.

The conference report noted that only a few European nations have maintained their 1981

aid to the Third World, while most, including the U.S. and Japan, have lagged behind. Instead, aid has totaled only 0.09% of GNP, resulting in some \$40 billion shortfall from the targeted levels over the decade.

"We thought things would get a lot better after 1981 and they got worse," said Yves Berthelot, UNCTAD deputy secretary general. "It's simply not acceptable that one-tenth of the world's population continue to be marginalized."

## Europe

### German industry calls for railroad building

The Congress of German Industry (DIHT) has called for priority projects in railroad-building, in a memorandum to the Ministry of Transportation in Bonn in mid-September.

"For decades, railroads have been the weakest element in the composition of transport sector enterprises. In order to change this situation, investments in a national and European-wide system of high-speed railroads must be given priority," a relevant passage read.

After study of proposals by jailed American economist Lyndon LaRouche, many German industry and government leaders have been discussing the economic potential of a "Productive Triangle" centered on high-speed rail networks linking Paris, Berlin, and Vienna-Prague, as a basis for rebuilding Eastern Europe and providing tangible economic aid to the Soviet Union. The DIHT proposal seems to reflect that discussion.

In tandem with British intelligence instigated attacks on rail development, the Sept. 11 *Journal of Commerce* carried a guest editorial by Jack Duchemin entitled "Forget About

High-Tech Trains," which attacked magnetically levitated trains and the French TGV high-speed train.

## East Bloc

### Soviet monthly praises Count Witte's economics

A call for the revival of the economic and foreign policies of Count Sergei Witte, turn-of-the-century prime minister under Czar Nicholas II, has appeared in the July 1990 the Soviet Foreign Ministry's monthly, *International Affairs*. The call proposed that Witte's development policy be revived, anchored in Russia's "good and reliable partner," Germany.

The call took the form of a letter, "Foreign Policy to Meet National Priorities," written by Yuri Ilyin, deputy director of International Politics at the Higher Party School in Moscow.

Ilyin states, "The old European order has now crumbled. . . . Let us not fool ourselves: The postwar settlement has gone never to return. One can and, perhaps must speak of it, but that will, after all, be like trying to hold on to the Holy Alliance and the Versailles system in their days. . . . So, we have to base our approach to the 'German issue' on our own long-term interest."

Ilyin asserted that when Russia stopped listening to Witte, who was overthrown in the revolution of 1905, the result was World War I and Russia's ruination: "Russia's confrontation with Germany in World War I stood out as amazingly senseless. For it interrupted a continuous 30-year cycle of the world's fastest economic growth! Now, what course would world history have taken if the rulers of Russia had followed the worldly-wise statesman, Count S.Y. Witte, who insisted back at the turn of the century on 20-25 years of full calm in Russia's foreign affairs?"

Ilyin also praised Witte for not wanting to "pull Britain's chestnuts out of the fire" in its confrontation with Germany. "For Russia to have kept out of the Entente could have meant radically changing the course of world developments in the 20th century. We have now once more reached a similar threshold in our

relations with Germany, and God save us from starting to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for somebody else! So, it is high time we started turning back to the traditional foreign policy values of Russia. . . . A united Germany must live in peace with Russia and must be her good and reliable partner. . . . We should, if belatedly, follow the abovementioned recommendations of Count Sergei Witte."

## Insurance

### Industry asks for federal regulation

"It might be necessary to have federal regulatory assistance," the president of the American Insurance Association, Robert Vagley, told the House Energy and Commerce Committee Sept. 14. The association represents 239 of the nation's largest property and casualty insurers.

The statement, which represents a major shift for an industry long opposed to federal regulation, reflects the industry's fear that state insurance regulators are unprepared to deal with the widespread financial problems affecting insurers.

However, the American Council of Life Insurance, which represents the most powerful life insurance companies, still opposes federal regulation, according to the *Washington Post*.

## Energy

### Andreotti calls for nuclear revival

Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti has called for a revival of nuclear energy in his nation, and charged that "American oil companies" are a major culprit in the international sabotage of the nuclear industry. "It seems that the oil companies are not extraneous to the American anti-nuclear campaign," said Andreotti at a conference held in Perugia on Italy's energy situation in the wake of the Persian Gulf crisis.

Andreotti asserted that Italy must return to

nuclear energy, and cited the deleterious effects of the anti-nuclear referendum voted up in Italy in 1987.

He warned, "One must be careful about foreign infiltration," citing the Six Sisters oil cartel.

"In the best scenario, we are bound to the aspirations of the Arab world to consider oil as a common good. But there is also the prospect of a class war in those areas, and then we should really fear for our supplies."

The president of public industries, IRI, declared, "It was a mistake to stop the construction of the Montalto di Castro nuclear energy station. Now we are at the mercy of the oil-exporting countries."

Industry Minister Battaglia said that Italy's energy bill this year will be 5 trillion liras higher than last year.

## Labor

### Depression conditions put unions on the ropes

American industry is contracting rapidly, and according to Morgan Stanley analyst Scott Merlis, as quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, "They're buying the right to downsize" from their labor unions.

The United Auto Workers and General Motors have come to terms under which GM will spend some \$4 billion on job and income protection programs, but is apparently not required to find work for any of the 30,000 union members the company has laid off during the past three years.

Meanwhile, 5,000 schoolteachers have gone on strike in New Orleans over \$400,000 worth of health benefits—the first walkout in New Orleans schools since 1978. It is expected to be a long strike since the teachers are asking \$1 million in new benefits and pay raises, but the school board offered only \$600,000.

Workers at the *New York Post* have also agreed to \$20 million in wage and salary cuts to keep that newspaper in business, the *New York Times* reports.

# Briefly

● **ONLY ONE COMPANY** that is still fully American-owned produces high-powered industrial lasers for materials processing, according to a laser industry analyst at the Arthur D. Little Company. These lasers range in power from 5-25 kilowatts and are used as machine tools for cutting, drilling, and other operations.

● **THE MAGELLAN** spacecraft, during a test of its radar on Aug. 16, produced three images of craters on Venus similar to those on Earth, and also earthquake faults. The poor quality of resolution on previous missions to Venus had left open the question of whether or not there is geological and tectonic activity on Earth's sister planet.

● **THE WORLD BANK** has reported record looting of developing countries in 1989. The new annual report says there was a "record net outflow of resources" from developing countries to industrialized countries of \$42.9 billion in 1989, surpassing the record \$37.6 billion of 1988, the *Financial Times* reported. The report says that the main reason for the net outflow was a collapse in new loans (minus capital repaid) to only \$16.6 billion from \$22.8 billion.

● **THE TWO LARGEST** industrial groups in the world, Mitsubishi and Daimler-Benz, are meeting in Tokyo to map out broad global cooperation. According to Mitsubishi spokesman Taniguchi, "Between 100 and 150 joint ventures" are planned worldwide. Daimler chairman Edzard Reuter has led a 70-man corporate delegation to discuss specifics of the cooperation.

● **SOUTH KOREA** and the Soviet Union signed a trade agreement in Moscow Sept. 15 granting most favored nation status treatment to one another, a spokesman for South Korea's Trade and Industry Ministry told UPI.