

BRITISH METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE SPINS OFF CLIMATE RESEARCH CENTER

Parting ways from her friends and allies in the Bush government, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain has been sounding an alarm on global warming. Convinced that the possibility of catastrophic climate change warrants urgent attention, and putting her money where her mouth is, she has established a research organization that is clearly intended to be the world's premier authority on climate change.

On 25 May, Thatcher personally inaugurated the new Hadley Climate Prediction and Research Center, which has been set up as an appendage of Great Britain's Meteorological Office, already recognized among atmospheric scientists as one of the world's leading climate research establishments. Thatcher first announced her intention to create such a center in a speech to the United Nations on 8 November last year.

The Hadley Center will be housed in a building near the Met Office in Bracknell, 35 miles west of London near Reading, where the European Center for Medium-Range Forecasting is located. On 2 April the Met Office was reestablished as an autonomous agency. While it still is linked closely to Britain's Ministry of Defense, which remains its parent department, the idea is that from now on MOD will be merely one customer among others for the Met Office's services, albeit the most important one. The reorganization would seem to reflect a Thatcherite preference for making government agencies more businesslike and self-supporting.

Since 1985 the Met Office has been headed by John Houghton, previously a professor of atmospheric sciences at Oxford. Houghton serves as chairman of the international Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which will report to the United Nations at the end of this year.

Big boost

David Carson, who was responsible for the atmospheric sciences at the Natural Environmental Research Council for three years before returning to the Met Office, has been named head of the climate center. Carson says that while negotiations with the government are still under way, it is expected that the center will have a budget of about £6 million per annum (\$10 million) for three years. He says that the Met Office has a total re-

search budget of £8 to £10 million, and that perhaps one-quarter or one-third of that is devoted to climate research and forecasting. So "the government's initiative is a massive boost for us," Carson observes.

The Hadley Center is to be equipped with a new supercomputer, and 60 researchers from the Met Office will provide the core staff to do climate modeling and data analysis. Carson expects to see the center develop very close links with researchers in all of Europe, as well as in the United States, and he hopes to see the visitor program become a very important part of its overall effort.

Main research themes at the climate center are expected to include:

- ▷ Predicting regional climate change to 2100
- ▷ Providing the foundations for improved predictions of regional climate change
- ▷ Providing a focus for national research programs relevant to the prediction of climate change
- ▷ Providing the UK's point of contact

and center of cooperation with international climate prediction programs.

The Hadley Center sees itself as singularly well equipped for its tasks. "The Meteorological Office has actively participated in climate research for a number of years," a press packet prepared for the 25 May inauguration said, "and until the recent opening of the Hamburg center [a Max Planck institute], it had the only center outside of the US with the expertise and capability for making climate predictions."

Judging from the press packet, which presumably was cleared at a high level, the British government's reading of scientific opinion is different from the Bush government's. "Scientific research has established that man-made emissions are substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of the main greenhouse gases," the packet says. "The scientific consensus is that this will lead to a warming of the Earth's surface."

—WILLIAM SWEET

CAMBRIDGE TO BE HOME FOR NEW MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE

A new mathematics research institute, called the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Science, will be established at Cambridge University. Building on the university's formidable strengths in physics, astrophysics and mathematics, the institute will run programs in all aspects of mathematics including applications in physics, biology and other sciences.

It is intended that Michael Atiyah, the mathematician whom Cambridge just lured away from the University of Oxford to serve as master of Trinity College, will be the first director of the institute. Atiyah, a Field medalist, has worked primarily in mathematical physics in recent years. He is president-elect of the Royal Society.

According to Cambridge professors Martin J. Rees and Peter Landshoff, who have been involved in planning the institute, it will be modeled on the Institute of Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the Mathematics Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, both of which are funded by the National Science Foundation. The

institute will have a director and possibly a deputy director, but no permanent faculty. It will sponsor six-month visitor programs, on two topics concurrently, so that four such programs will take place each year.

The Isaac Newton Institute was conceived by people associated with Cambridge University, and it will be housed in a building that is to be erected on land belonging to St. John's College. The building will include offices for 45 scholars, a library and ample meeting spaces, and it will be provided free of charge by St. John's during the institute's first five years of operation.

The Science and Engineering Research Council, Britain's counterpart of NSF, has promised to support the institute, though it has yet to commit itself to an exact sum. Trinity College has promised to contribute about £1 million toward running costs for the first five years.

It is hoped that the institute will be ready to offer its first two visitor programs in the second half of 1992.

—WILLIAM SWEET ■