

the Department of Trade and Industry, where it was moved from the cabinet office in 1995, adds John Mulvey, a retired University of Oxford physicist and director of the independent lobby group Save British Science, "We are also concerned that the government will see science too much as an adjunct of industry."

Although Battle isn't a scientist—he trained for the Catholic priesthood but then took his degree in English—he's said to be energetic, enthusiastic and receptive to ideas from the scientific community. He's been a member of Parliament since 1987, and while Labour was in opposition he served as shadow minister of energy and of science and technology. Battle reports to Margaret Beckett, a metallurgist by training, who is secretary of state for trade and industry and cabinet minister for science and technology; Anne Campbell, a statistician who is trusted by the scientific community, will help with the science part of Battle's brief.

"The hope is that Beckett will prove more active in science policy than her predecessor," says Mulvey. "But we know nothing yet." Battle hadn't yet set specific priorities for science when

PHYSICS TODAY went to press. But many in the British scientific community expect more discussion upon release of the Dearing report, a nationwide review of funding and organization of higher education inherited from the previous government. Also of keen interest to the community will be the government's choice of new chief executives for the UK's leading funders for the physical sciences—the research councils for particle physics and astronomy, and for the engineering and physical sciences.

"If the country wants to maintain its excellent standards across a wide range of scientific disciplines, then government will have to put money into it," says Mulvey. And, despite the 18-month freeze on government spending, Save British Science is lobbying the new government to at least reverse cuts in research and higher education that were planned by the old government—cuts of about £52 million (about \$88 million) for 1997 and £93 million for 1998 (both values are adjusted for inflation). Says Mulvey, "This sort of start would be a timely signal of intent, and have an enormously encouraging impact on morale."

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ruary, page 58). And since December, CERN management has sought other ways to reduce spending over the next few years. Now CERN has come up with a plan that cuts costs and also helps allay staff worries of further sweeping salary cuts.

The plan is for individual staff members to sign up for various optional programs that would cut personnel costs. Their options include taking early retirement, accepting less pay now for more time off later, or working reduced hours for a proportionate decrease in pay. The details have yet to be worked out, but management and staff both hope that enough money will be saved by these voluntary measures; otherwise, CERN may again impose levies or take other unilateral actions. "We are in favor of the voluntary measures, providing there is a guarantee of stable employment conditions," says Derek Ball, vice president of CERN's staff association. "We'll try to convince staff to take these measures."

Stability is indeed a key issue at CERN, and one that has stirred up tensions in the past months. Some CERN council delegates, who represent the organization's 19 member states, have talked about restructuring the salary and promotion systems, and of reconsidering other benefits such as pension plans and health insurance. The staff association has actively fought such actions, arguing that CERN cannot legally change its contract with its employees before 2001, when the current five-year review period is up.

Although the recent proposal may allay staff fears, many council delegates feel that management is being too soft on the staff, "in view of the financial burdens on the people in the member states," says Dutch delegate Bernard de Wit. And the council, management and staff are discussing "ways to make savings beyond voluntary measures—though this topic is not yet on the council's agenda," he adds. But Maurice Robin, CERN's director of administration, defends management's proposal: "Surely from the point of view of the workload at CERN, it's best to use a consensus approach," he says. And, referring to the nearly 1400 appeals made by staff members to protest the 2.5% crisis levy, Robin adds, "You can't have this kind of phenomenon every year." Decisions on the appeals, lodged with the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, Switzerland, are expected in about a year.

Meanwhile, says Ball, "What we'd like to do is get on with building the LHC."

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## CERN Plans to Reduce Costs through Voluntary Pay Cuts

When CERN decided last December to build the Large Hadron Collider, or LHC, sooner than originally planned, it was clear that the organization's budget would be tight. It was also clear that personnel spending

would be a prime target for cutting corners. This year, about 9 million Swiss francs (about \$6.3 million), or 2% of CERN's personnel budget, is being saved by docking all CERN salaries by 2.5% (see PHYSICS TODAY, Feb-



"THE CERN STAFF ASSOCIATION will not stand by idly while the announced financial and intellectual erosion continues," said Michel Vitasse, the association's president. Vitasse (fourth from right) is flanked by vice presidents Derek Ball (left) and Jean-Pol Matheys at a press conference in April held to publicize the association's concerns about the future of CERN.