



B.C.E. “Mike needed to get those two monuments closer together in time, and he’s done it,” says Richard Bradley, an archaeologist at the University of Reading in the U.K., though he notes that some wiggle room remains.

Even if Durrington Walls and Stonehenge were part of a single “ritual landscape,” as Parker Pearson has argued, their symbolic

meaning is still open to debate. For example, archaeologist Timothy Darvill of Bournemouth University in Dorset, U.K., has coproposed the idea that the bluestones were transported from Wales because of their healing properties and that Stonehenge was a center of healing (*Science*, 11 April, p. 159). “To have animals coming in from Wales fits our idea quite nicely,” says Darvill.

This summer, Parker Pearson’s team plans to find out more about the founders of Stonehenge by excavating possible seasonal houses just west of the monument. The new site is roughly dated to about 3000 B.C.E., when Stonehenge was still just an earthwork circle and the monument we see today was just a gleam in a prehistoric eye.

—MICHAEL BALTER

## FRANCE

## Despite Protest, CNRS Moves Toward Major Shakeup

PARIS—Researchers and science labor unions last week stopped a proposed reform of one of Europe’s biggest research agencies with their bodies. But their victory may be short-lived, as France’s science ministry says the makeover of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) will proceed.

On 19 June, the leaders of more than 1000 protesting researchers and workers occupied an ornate meeting room inside the Parisian headquarters of CNRS, where the agency’s board of trustees was to vote on the controversial reform plan. Worried that angry protesters might take over the entire building, CNRS President Catherine Bréchnignac canceled the meeting.

The proposed shakeup would create eight new institutes within CNRS. The protesters say that amounts to “dismantling” the science flagship. But other researchers contend that the reforms will improve CNRS and could plant the seeds for a new national institute that would unify the life sciences in France.

With a €3.3 billion budget and a staff of 32,000, CNRS spans the disciplines from anthropology to astrophysics. Its researchers—civil servants with jobs for life—are spread out across the country, often working in close collaboration with university scientists. “Horizon 2020,” a strategic plan drawn up by the center’s leadership and France’s ministry of higher education and research, proposes to replace CNRS’s department-based structure with institutes based on



**Under protest.** Researchers and union members gathered outside and inside the headquarters of France’s National Center for Scientific Research, delaying a key vote on reforms.

scientific fields such as chemistry, mathematics, and physics. Some of these could become “national institutes” and take a leading role. The structure would be clearer and more efficient, according to the plan.

But the unions and *Sauvons la Recherche* (SLR), a movement founded in 2003 to protest budget cuts by the previous government, says the plan would be the “death” of CNRS and another step toward a U.S.-style system in which researchers face cutthroat competition and permanent job insecurity. The groups have fought previous reforms such as the creation of a national research agency for project-based funding and a law that gives universities more autonomy (see Editorial, p. 1695).

CNRS’s own scientific council isn’t happy, either. On 16 June, its members voted 10 to 7 against the plan. The breakup into distinct institutes would hamper interdiscipli-

nary work, a key CNRS strength, says anthropobiologist Gilles Boëtisch, who chairs the council.

Under CNRS rules, the board must hold another meeting within 20 days with the same agenda. Union and SLR leaders want Bréchnignac and French science minister Valérie Pécresse to hold a new round of consultations and delay implementation of any reform. A ministry spokesperson says that Pécresse will reassure scientists that CNRS will continue to exist and preserve the rights of staff but that she will stick with the plan.

Complicating the debate are several long-running divisions.

Some SLR members accuse President Nicolas Sarkozy’s conservative government of settling political scores with the left-leaning CNRS. There have also been tensions within CNRS between physicists, who have dominated its leadership, and biologists, who say they have been given short shrift. (Bréchnignac, an atomic physicist, fanned those flames when she said recently that CNRS biologists could perform better.)

Biologist Jules Hoffmann, president of the French Academy of Sciences, says the time is ripe for coordinating programs at CNRS, the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM), and perhaps other government players. The creation of a strong life sciences institute within CNRS, he adds, could even be the first step toward a full-fledged merger, which could correct a fragmented structure that weakens French science.

—MARTIN ENSERINK