

more inclined to demand debt relief and even a moratorium.

AIDS

Doctor calls for testing of surgeons

The public should demand that surgeons be tested for AIDS regularly, says Dr. Lorraine Day, chief orthopedic surgeon at San Francisco General Hospital. Day spoke at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco Feb. 21.

She said that surgeons face high risk of contracting the deadly AIDS virus in the operating room, in turn putting surgical patients in danger. She said other surgical patients in danger. She that she herself gets tested every six months.

Dr. Day said that she is concerned that tiny particles of the virus can circulate in the air of the operating room as suspended particles in the spray and aerosols generated by operating room power equipment.

Her lecture was interrupted by members of "ACT UP," the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, who shouted, "Stop AIDS phobia! Quarantine Lorraine Day!"

East-West

Satellite computer link with Russians

A satellite link has been set up connecting U.S. and Soviet computers directly for the first time. A group of entrepreneurs, in a joint venture with the Soviets, established the two-way satellite connection in January.

Scientists are already happily making use of the computer link-up, but some fear that it poses a threat to the national security.

David Leith, a high-energy physicist at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, is using the link to exchange messages and data with physicists in Novosibirsk (Siberia) who are conducting joint scientific experiments with U.S. scientists.

Researchers at the Space Studies Insti-

tute at Princeton are using the computer link to discuss joint Soviet-U.S. space missions with researchers at the Moscow Aviation Institute. There is also a computer link between the United States Academy of Sciences and its Soviet counterpart.

The link was the result of a proposal made by John Draper, an Alameda, California computer programmer, after he returned from a visit to the Soviet Union.

But others are expressing fear of the danger of espionage. "My concern is that these folks are exceeding their authority as private citizens," said Will Bralick, a computer scientist at the Air Force Institute of Technology. "Given the open communication channel between hackers, who knows what these people are getting."

Agriculture

Bad weather poses threat in Mideast

Three months of extremely bad weather has severely hit the agricultural output of the Middle Eastern countries.

In the space of a few days in mid-February, 50% of the tomato production in Israel was wiped out by frost. In the Negev region, the production of tomatoes, mangos, and avocados was wiped out. The same occurred in Jordan.

The weather disaster is occurring at a time when Israel's agriculture has been collapsing for financial reasons. By the end of January, there were three spectacular cases of suicide by Israeli farmers who were part of the cooperative (*moshav*) system. The farmers were unable to handle their debt burdens. In one cooperative, of 67 chicken farms that existed in 1987, only 22 remained at the beginning of 1989.

The kibbutz system is even more debt-ridden than the individual farmers of the *moshav*.

To make matters worse, there are now predictions that by spring, the entire Middle East could be as affected as Africa is by the locust plague. Locusts have reached Saudi Arabia and southern Iran, and some have even traveled as far as Istanbul, Turkey.

Briefly

● **NEW YORK CITY'S** comptroller has threatened to sell the city pension fund's \$7.6 million stake in Chemical Bank. While this represents only 0.37% of Chemical shares outstanding, the city pension fund is a very large institutional investor with influence over other institutional investors. The reason given by the comptroller's office is that Chemical has supplied a credit line to the South Africa-linked Minorco for its hostile takeover of Consolidated Gold Fields.

● **A TAIWAN** company is prepared to make "Made in U.S.A." labels and export them to the United States. Ming Teh Flag Co. has suggested that American companies buy foreign-made "Made in USA" labels to replace "Made in Taiwan" labels. In a proposal to the U.S. Congress, Ming Teh said, "We suggest you cut off this label after you receive the goods and spend very little cost to mark on the flags your own brand name and 'Made in USA' signs. We can offer the labels, too."

● **FIDEL CASTRO** is apparently trying to return Cuba to its pre-1959 "roots" under Batista, when it was the playground of organized crime and the idle rich. Desperate for foreign exchange, Castro is now seeking to attract Western tourists' dollars as the top "development" priority.

● **FOOD RIOTS** are under way in Guyana, according to former Foreign Minister Fred Wills, who now resides in the United States. A general strike is set for late February, he said. Food, when available, is going for astronomical sums: A single egg is \$5! Wills's sources report the situation to be so bad that starving adults have been seen grabbing food out of the mouths of children.

● **THE WATER** resources of the Jordan River basin, feeding into Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, may be depleted by the year 2000, according to a report in the Feb. 22 *Financial Times* of London.