

by 1980, so that even if expenditure on new roads does increase by 15 per cent a year for the next few years, there will be more congested roads in 1970 than there are now. Some, at least, of Mrs. Castle's impetuous impatience with private motor cars can be understood if not excused.

But what is to be done? The report has some cheerful things to say about recent progress with civil engineering design; obviously a great deal is being done to reduce costs and to build more quickly. There is also great promise in special studies, like that at Manchester, in which a detailed study of several alternative means of public transport is being carried out. In the long run, this is the only way in which really sensible decisions about innovations such as monorails can be made. Thus the report contains some evidence to show that Mrs. Castle's brave talk of a fully integrated transport system, and her sensible plan to weld regional public transport authorities out of the disintegrated pattern of organizations which now exists, may yet be blessed with really modern technology. The danger, of course, is that the Ministry may regard the problems of growth as a threat and not a challenge.

### No Change for Decimals

THE British Government is still sticking to its prepared position on the decimalization of British money, and remains unmoved by the arguments that it would be easier to make the transition from the duodecimal to the decimal system by using the present ten shillings—and not the pound sterling—as the primary unit. In the House of Commons on December 22 Mr. J. Diamond, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said that there had been no new argument against the choice of the pound since the publication of the White Paper on decimalization. Although Mr. Diamond acknowledged that the ten shilling unit "has a strong case", he gave it flatly as his opinion that the case for the pound was even more cogent. He went on to suggest that abandoning the pound would entail "disturbing people" without need, and pointed to some recent suggestions that in the transition from pounds to dollars in Australia, "people are still thinking in terms of the £ when they buy larger items". The House of Commons will no doubt have an opportunity to debate the whole question when the necessary legislation is prepared.

### OECD on Technology

WITHIN weeks of the announcement of a White House committee to study the supposed technological gap between the United States and Western Europe, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has made public its intention of carrying out similar work in Europe. In a statement last week the organization says that it intends to study in depth a number of industries including those manufacturing electronic components and computers, plastics and synthetic fibres, scientific instruments, iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, food-processing, pharmaceuticals and textiles. The work is to be superintended by the Science Policy Committee of the OECD, and Dr. Alexander King, the head of the division, said last week that the studies would be continuations of work which the OECD has been engaged on for the best part of 1966. The organization is also planning to continue

and extend its work in the collection of statistics about expenditure on and manpower engaged in scientific research and development and on the migration of scientists and engineers. As yet the OECD has no precise idea of the kinds of solutions it may eventually be able to recommend. It also remains to be seen whether it will find its work overtaken by events, for both the Italian and the British governments are actively looking for ways of fostering what Mr. Harold Wilson has called "a European technological community".

### Doctors up in Arms

THE British Medical Association has expressed "grave concern" about the future of medicine in the armed forces. The immediate issue is the outcome of a prolonged wrangle over pay for doctors in the services.

The service doctors, like the university clinical teachers (*Nature*, 212, 1287; 1966), are falling behind in the scramble for more pay. The BMA blames the Government's interpretation of its prices and incomes policy and hints darkly about being unable to support recruitment of doctors to the services in future. The story really begins with the awards to general practitioners in 1965 and 1966, which destroyed the slight differential in favour of service doctors. The BMA regarded this as a change of policy and went to the Ministry of Defence in June to ask for a 40 per cent pay increase for doctors in the services. The Ministry offered to ask the Treasury for 20 per cent backdated to April 1966.

Then came the freeze, but if the Government hoped to let things lie, the service doctors did not. Under pressure, the Government has now come up with an offer of 10 per cent, to come into effect in July, backdated to October. This would leave the service doctors among the worst paid doctors in Britain. The BMA will now lobby the Prime Minister. The service doctors are in a weak position, bound as they are by their terms of service, but that only rubs salt in what they consider to be their wounds.

### Glasgow Kidney Studies

THE Medical Research Council is to set up what is virtually a new unit at the Western Infirmary, Glasgow. The intention is to fill the gap left by the break-up of the Atheroma Research Unit following the untimely death of Dr. Brian Bronte-Stewart 18 months ago.

The director of the unit will be Dr. A. F. Lever, who is at present a Leverhulme fellow at St. Mary's Hospital Medical School. He intends to investigate water and electrolyte balance in normal and pathological states. His interest is centred on the renin-aldosterone system—a hormonal system which links the kidney and the adrenal glands and by which the kidney can take part indirectly in the regulation of the excretion of sodium in the urine. This mechanism is closely linked to the aetiology of heart failure and high blood pressure, and the main clinical benefits of the work of the unit will probably lie in these fields. Several lines of research are planned. For example, there will be an investigation of the sodium regulation mechanism of fish, which are subject to wide variations in environmental sodium concentrations. The unit will also study Addison's disease, in which the patient is unable to produce the hormone aldosterone.