

With luck, this part of the project could provide the detailed understanding of the needs of readers in libraries on which good planning should in future depend.

Librarians elsewhere may think that OSTI is getting a bargain at £12,500. The use of computers in the management of library catalogues has been a live issue for several years, and was, for example, one of the principal themes at a conference on the subject in Oxford in 1966. Apart from complications such as the need that the catalogues of scholarly libraries should contain entries in unfamiliar languages, the handling of really complicated library catalogues is bedevilled by the sheer mechanical difficulty of sorting entries, even with computers. One of the possibilities which excite librarians is that effective use of computers could enable them rapidly and cheaply to compile selective bibliographies.

Profits for Some

If dissatisfaction with past performance were any guarantee of improvement, advanced British industries would have little to worry about. The latest to come under critical examination is the low temperature industry in Britain, which is concerned with such things as superconducting magnets, liquefaction of gases, low temperature solid state devices, and the preservation of biological materials. A new ginger group, the British Cryogenics Council, has been started to encourage British industry to take advantage of opportunities in this field. The council, which has the support of eleven institutions and societies, is to begin work under the wing of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, but intends to lead an independent existence providing advice to industry, organizing meetings and conferences, and collecting and disseminating data. The first chairman of the council will be Professor G. G. Hasledon of the University of Leeds, and Mr S. Kugler will be both secretary and treasurer.

There is clearly enormous potential in cryogenics. Most of the science is not particularly new—as Dr K. Mendelssohn pointed out at the inaugural meeting of the council, superconductivity was discovered in 1911—but the technology has become profitable only recently. An important stimulus has been the United States rocket programme, with its need for sophisticated handling of liquefied gases. To some British observers, this alone explains why American companies are far ahead, but it is probably only a small part of the whole story.

Can the new council help? The answer is yes, but not much. It will be good for British companies to have advice at the end of a telephone, but academic advice unconstrained by the problems of management is often a mixed blessing. Establishing standards and codes will also be worthwhile, but standards tend to be set by the companies who get there first, not by well meaning advice years later. As with other aspects of the technology gap, the answer lies much more in financial adjustments, the size of the market and the availability of capital.

Wellcome Trust

BETWEEN 1964 and 1966 the Wellcome Trust gave away about £2.5 million in the support of medical

research. The money is derived from the distributed profits of the Wellcome Foundation, Ltd. The chief aim of the trust is to lend flexibility to the way in which medical research is financed, by supporting new advances or subjects which fall between two disciplines. As the sixth report of the foundation makes clear, it does not seek to make up the deficiencies created by inadequate allocations from public funds.

So far some 45 per cent of the funds have been used to build research accommodation, but this is not to continue—the trustees consider that the provision of buildings should not rely on a charitable foundation. The Trust will continue, however, to support research into endemic tropical diseases, which are insufficiently studied because they occur in countries with little money to spare for research. The Trust has also made a large number of individual grants, continued support for its research laboratories in Nairobi, and taken an interest in the history of medicine and the problems of communication between medical research workers.

More Elbow Room

THE financial freedom of the United States National Academy of Sciences has been substantially increased by gifts of \$1 million and \$5 million respectively from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. In an announcement last week, Dr Frederick Seitz, President of the academy, said that these gifts would increase the academy's ability to carry out its present tasks, and he is evidently hoping that other foundations will follow the examples of Rockefeller and Ford. In practice, what the academy is aiming at is a better balance between its own funds and those which come from government and other official sources. Although the annual operating budget is now rather more than \$20 million a year, almost all of this is earmarked for particular tasks undertaken at the request of the federal government or other agencies. The general budget of the academy is supported largely by a capital fund of \$8 million, with the result that the academy's own contribution to its operating budget is less than 1 per cent of the total.

Don't Spare the Rod

IT almost looks as if the conference of the National Association of Head Teachers which took place in Scarborough last week was an elaborate joke. The teachers, after all, are in charge of British state schools, and responsible for putting into practice the modestly radical proposals for reorganization which the British Government has proposed. Last week they passed some motions so reactionary that they would have given even a conference of Conservative women pause to think.

The head teachers fixed their position in the educational spectrum by three decisions. By a decision of the 15,000 members, top priority for discussion—more important than comprehensives, government policy, or even pay—went to a motion calling for the maintenance of morning worship and religious instruction in schools. No head teacher voted against. Obedience, however, comes only a short step behind godliness, and the head teachers reaffirmed their faith in the cane. The Plowden report, which recommended