

UNIVERSITIES

New Chairman Found

THE Department of Education and Science has now chosen Mr K. E. Berrill to succeed Sir John Wolfenden as chairman of the University Grants Committee. Mr Berrill is the first bursar of King's College, Cambridge, a university lecturer in economics and currently in the middle of a two-year secondment to the Treasury, where since October 1967 he has been adviser responsible for public expenditure. Outside Cambridge and the Treasury he is not well known, but according to Cambridge colleagues he made an outstanding reputation for himself as a member of the General Board of the Faculties. This is by far the most important body in Cambridge, as it decides the rate and priorities of the university's expenditure.

Mr Berrill, who is 47, was a student at the London School of Economics during the Second World War when the LSE was evacuated to Cambridge. Afterwards he went back to Cambridge, where he formed part of the latter-day Keynesian circle. In 1949 he became a fellow of St Catharine's and then bursar, and in 1962 he moved to King's as bursar. This move offered him the advantages of being among old economist friends and gave him, at the same time, an opportunity to manage the same finances as those which enabled Keynes to make the college rich in the 1930s. Mr Berrill was schooled in university politics as a member of the faculty board of economics and the general board of faculties, and in real politics as an economic adviser to Turkey, British Guiana and the Cameroons before being appointed to the Treasury.

At first sight his appointment to the UGC may seem to add substance to the charge that the independence of the UGC is being eroded so that it is little more than an extramural branch of the DES (see also page 534). But those who know Mr Berrill best, former colleagues at King's and in the Government, see the other side of the coin. By all accounts he is a good committee man and has a fine grasp of economic and financial issues. Above all, he has an intimate knowledge of Whitehall and probably knows as well as anyone how best to circumvent as well as to apply Government restrictions on expenditure. As a skilled negotiator who knows the ropes, he may yet emerge as another gamekeeper turned poacher. Certainly, if the UGC is so minded, it may yet be valuable to have at its head somebody who has worked closely at the Treasury on criteria for justifying public expenditure.

ABORTIONS

Supply and Demand

ON November 4 a special centre was opened in Margaret Street, in the West End of London, to provide advice for those women who still find it difficult to have their

pregnancies terminated—either because of opposition from their general practitioners or because of the hostile attitude of their local hospitals. Known as the Pregnancy Advisory Service, the centre is a charitable organization and is the first of its kind to be set up in England since the Abortion Act was brought into force six months ago.

Mr Alan Golding, chairman of the organization, said this week that the centre had become necessary because "the Abortion Act is not working as well as it should". For example, although abortions are permitted by law on social grounds, a British Medical Association council directive issued earlier this year could not fully accept this clause, maintaining that "artificial termination of pregnancy is ethical only in the interests of the health of the mother or where there is risk of a serious abnormality of the foetus". In addition, doctors and hospital officials in some areas are often unsympathetic and uncooperative.

For a charge of £2 10s, women can visit the new centre and consult qualified, sympathetic doctors, a number of whom, it seems, have offered their services on the agreed part-time basis. These doctors will try to arrange for women to be admitted to hospitals for abortions, and if necessary will arrange to have the operation carried out privately at the lowest possible cost. Although the centre is open every day for women to make appointments and to see the social worker, the number of doctors and consulting sessions will depend on the demand. Doctors' fees excluded, Mr Golding estimates that the centre will cost about £5,000 a year.

The extent to which the number of abortions varies from one hospital region to another is indicated in the Registrar General's return for the June quarter published last week (HMSO, 3s 6d). Between April 27 and July 2, 1968, the highest number of abortions carried out was in the North West Metropolitan region (1,841); the lowest number was in Wessex hospital region (66). Hospitals in the Birmingham region—which until the opening of the Birmingham Pregnancy Advisory Service, staffed only by voluntary counsellors, were particularly unsympathetic—recorded 200 abortions for the same period. Out of the total 4,412 abortions performed, 3,076 were on the grounds of risk of injury to the physical and mental health of the woman. Nearly two-thirds of the operations were carried out in National Health Service hospitals.

INNOVATION

Investment in Chemicals

FOR some years the National Institute for Economic and Social Research has been carrying out an investigation of investment in chemical plant and its implications for innovation. Mr Christopher Freeman of the Science Policy Unit of the University of Sussex, who has been in charge of the study, explained some

Premises	Newcastle	Leeds	Sheffield	East Anglia	North West Metropolitan	North East Metropolitan	South East Metropolitan	South West Metropolitan	Wessex	Oxford	South Western	Welsh	Birmingham	Manchester	Liverpool	Teaching hospitals, London	Total
N.H.S. hospital	283	126	133	167	278	176	188	166	66	118	104	187	191	208	70	291	2,7522
Approved place	2	8	2	24	1,563	1	35	2	—	1	9	—	8	3	—	—	1,658
Other place	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
All premises	285	134	135	191	1,841	177	223	168	66	120	113	187	200	211	70	291	4,412