

developed it would not be the ones to reap the best profits.

One of the most compelling—and depressing—contributions was made by Mr John Chown, tax correspondent of the *Financial Times*. He demonstrated how very difficult it is to find gaps in the taxation system in Great Britain, and said that even if all the other obstacles to innovation disappeared, the tax system alone would be a positive disincentive. One who agreed wholeheartedly was Mr B. Newsam, managing director of Telecommunications Instruments Ltd, who appeared to prove by an economic model all his own that innovation was impossible—or at least unprofitable, which is the same thing for the small businessman. Happily there was some disagreement with this view, but most people agreed that the private inventor in Britain works in a climate which is extraordinarily hostile to innovation. This, it seems, is an area where tax incentives could make a real difference.

DEFENCE

Combat Aircraft for Europe ?

THE “mini-TSR-2”—otherwise the advanced combat aircraft (Britain’s name) or the MRCA, the name the Germans use—seems to have run into trouble. This is not likely to be relieved by the ascendancy of the Deutsch-mark and the aggressive explosion of the German aerospace industry that goes with it. “What it is I know not, but it shall be the terror of the Earth” seems to have been the message conveyed by British Defence Minister, Denis Healey, in his recent talks in Bonn. The plan seems to have been that it should provide the dream military aircraft to carry Western Europe through the mid-seventies. The British dream was expected to appeal to Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and possibly Canada and be worth “hundreds of millions of pounds” in Mr Healey’s estimation. Politically it would be valuable as cement for a joint

project on the lines outlined earlier this year in the so-called Harmel plan proposed by the Belgian Foreign Minister, said Mr Healey.

The first difficulty seems to have been that Britain wants a two-seater strike-interceptor to fulfil its needs in the seventies while the other countries in the deal have less ambitious requirements calling only for a single-seater machine. Actual numbers likely to be involved also put Britain at a disadvantage—the maximum British requirement is for 300–350 aircraft while Germany wants from 400 to 450. At the same time the British Aircraft Corporation is seen by Mr Healey as the best candidate firm for the main construction, not least because of its expertise in the development of swing-wing joints. Germany’s Bolkow-Messerschmitt company thinks otherwise, and the German Federal Government’s view appears to have hardened despite German Defence Minister Dr Schroeder’s expressed view that it would be inadvisable to give German industry too big a role in the plane’s system engineering and design. The official line was certainly influenced by the inept offer by British ministers to trade promises of support for a German-inspired airbus project for agreement that British industry should have the main slice of the advanced military aircraft contract. Despite all this, Mr Healey still expects agreement with Germany on the advanced aircraft and the distribution of contracts to be completed before the end of the year.

TURKEY DISEASE

No Shadow over Christmas

THE Ministry of Agriculture seems satisfied that Britain’s Christmas dinners are in no way threatened by the six cases of Arizona paracolon which have occurred since August on turkey farms in Yorkshire, Montgomeryshire, Cheshire and Norfolk. The cases are nevertheless the first ever recorded in Britain, and



Part of the new Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes National Nature Reserve in Lincolnshire. The 293 acres of land, stretching along 4.5 miles of the Lincolnshire coast between Saltfleet Haven and Mablethorpe North End, have been purchased from the Ministry of Defence, as announced by the Nature Conservancy last week. A further 795 acres of foreshore have been leased from the Crown Estate Commissioners. The main dune ridge at Saltfleetby is thought to have been in existence for several centuries and its plant communities are more mature than those elsewhere on the Lincolnshire coast. Not only is the land valuable from the point of view of rare plants growing on the lime-rich sand, but because salt-marshes and dunes develop rapidly on this stretch of coast, it is particularly suitable for ecological and physiographic studies.