

Miscellaneous Intelligence

IT is now a long time since the appearance of the succession of reports on the supply of skilled manpower in Britain—Jones, Dainton and Swann. What have been the consequences? So far, the British Government has made no noticeable response. Even the new pension scheme, published a week ago, lacks the legislation on transferability for which the committees have been clamouring. The Schools Council and the Standing Conference on University Entrance are still talking to each other about schemes for making more flexible the transition from school to university, but nothing much seems likely to happen quickly. Certainly the Department of Education and Science seems to hold fast to the principle that too much intervention is bound to be unfortunate. Meanwhile, the statisticians have turned their attention from the traditional concern with the likely demand for skilled manpower to an attempt to predict what the supply will be. The census in 1971 seems to many to be a fine opportunity, but it is still a long way away.

A FIRM end to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics by farmers and doctors is expected to be one of the recommendations of the committee chaired by Professor Michael Swann. The committee was called into being by apprehensions about the growth of bacterial resistance to antibiotics and in particular the phenomenon of transferable drug resistance. Chloramphenicol, the chief drug used against typhoid, is one of the antibiotics whose potency the committee wishes to conserve. The report also frowns on doctors who dispense antibiotics for minor ailments.

MR LEO ROSSI is one of seven San Franciscans who have condemned the Federal government for its ban on cyclamates. The artificial sweeteners helped Mr Rossi to reduce his weight by 50 kg, from 250 to 200 kg, in six months. (*Corriere della Sera*, November 7.)

AN international library of computer programs in physics has been established at the Queen's University, Belfast, with the help of a grant from the Science Research Council. The idea is that the library will acquire and store computer programs, supplying a copy of each to regular subscribers or copies of particular programs to individual scientists.

DR WILLIAM O. BAKER, vice-president for Research and Patents at Bell Telephone Laboratories, has been awarded the 1970 medal of the Industrial Research Institute. Dr Baker is one of the reasons why the laboratory has been able to sustain a programme of fundamental research while making money.

THE Ford Foundation, ever in the swing, has now taken to making grants for what it calls "action programs" intended to draw attention to "pressing environmental issues". The new grants, which add up to \$374,000, will allow the Massachusetts Audubon Society to keep on providing advice to public organizations, the citizens of New Hampshire to organize "volunteer teams of business and professional leaders" to help in the creation of a framework for safeguarding the environment, and the Open Lands *Project of Chicago* and the *Park Association of New York* to drum up public interest in anti-pollution.

Parliament in Britain

Food and Drug Administration

THERE have been a great many questions about all sorts of food additives since the government's decision to ban cyclamates. Mr Harold Wilson said, however, that he did not think that a Food and Drug Administration, on the lines of the American body which first brought out the evidence to damn cyclamates, would be suited to British conditions. He said that it would be wrong to set up an authority outside the control of the House of Commons, and that ministers concerned with food pollution should be answerable to Parliament. Mr Maurice Edelman thought that a Food and Drug Administration would rationalize the present situation in which more than 300 different authorities are concerned with enforcing regulations governing food standards, but Dr Michael Winstanley thought that such a body would be no more than a sounding board for anti-fluoridists and other cranks. (Oral answers, November 4.)

Rabies

MR CLEDWYN HUGHES, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, said that dogs at present under house arrest in Camberley should not be vaccinated against rabies. No vaccine gives complete protection, he said, and its use in this country was not appropriate because it could lead to symptomless carriers of the disease, and there is no experience of its use in non-endemic conditions. Moreover, a dog which had twice been vaccinated against rabies died last year in kennels. Mr Hughes also said that a committee of inquiry which was set up to investigate the cause of the outbreak of rabies in Camberley was due to report in about two or three weeks time. Sir Richard Glyn, who asked Mr Hughes whether he would take steps to vaccinate these dogs, said that he was not satisfied with the minister's replies and that he would raise the matter again. (Oral answers, November 5.)

Marine Research

GOVERNMENT expenditure on marine science and technology in 1968-69 was £13.01 million, and the estimate for 1969-70 is £15.03 million. These figures were given by Dr Ernest A. Davies, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Technology, in a reply to a question from Mr Frank Judd, but Dr Davies made no further statement on the figures. (Written answers, November 3.)

Fire Blight

MR JAMES HOY, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, said that fire blight was recorded on 100 farms and nursery holdings in 1969, compared with 142, 164 and 140 outbreaks in 1966, 1967 and 1968, respectively. The outbreaks in 1969 affected 2,250 apple trees and 600 pear trees. Miss Joan Quennell also asked what had happened to the Ministry of Agriculture pamphlet *Fire Blight in Britain*, and whether any publicity could be made available so that the ordinary gardener would be able to recognize the disease among flowering shrubs. Mr Hoy replied that the ministry was revising the literature dealing with fire blight, and that it was doing its utmost to warn people of the dangers. (Oral answers, November 5.)